

A PLACE OF THEIR OWN

A History Of
Saint Adalbert Church
Enfield Connecticut
1915-1990

Rev. John P. Gwozdz



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DEDICATION

This History Is Dedicated To
The First Parishioners
of
Saint Adalbert Church

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J. P. G.

INTRODUCTION

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

At the age of seventy-five, St. Adalbert's parish has reached a point in its life when, if its history is not gathered and recorded, much of it will be lost forever. Parishioners who remember the earliest years are few, and memories fade. Brief historical sketches from jubilee programs survive but they, at best, provide only basic information. Whatever history remains has been stored away in collections of newspaper clippings and treasured memories.

I have always had a strong interest in the history of St. Adalbert's and in Enfield's Polish community. I grew up hearing stories about the "old timers." I could recall when Polish was heard on street corners as it mixed with the rumbling sound of carpet mill looms. I began collecting fragments of St. Adalbert's history nineteen years ago and started formal preparations for this history in 1984. Parishioners were asked to provide what material they could and, although the response was generous, it also revealed how little was left. Even so, I am surprised that so much could be written from the information that was gathered.

You may be surprised, at first, by how much space is given to the history of Enfield's Polish community in general. St. Adalbert's was a product of that community. What happened in the community affected the parish, and what took place in the parish often had an impact on the community. The story of St. Adalbert's, then, could only be properly told within the larger story of the people it was established to serve. At the same time, however, the scope of this history is limited to St. Adalbert's; whatever happened in the Polish community that did not somehow pertain to the parish is not included.

The greatest fear of any writer of history is perpetuating inaccuracies. Occasionally some material contradicted other material. Even newspaper accounts of the same event conflicted. I tended to favor the older material because it was closer in time to the subject being discussed. Also, I gave more weight to what was reported in *The Catholic Transcript* because it was usually more knowledgeable about diocesan matters than the secular press.

You will also notice that I did not translate the first names of the immigrants. As a rule, I used the name by which a person was known at the time, i.e. Jan instead of John, Katarzyna instead of Katherine. Unfortunately, printing does not allow for the many letter markings that indicate Polish pronunciations, such as the slashed "L" which has the sound of a "W." I should add that Jan Gwozdz, the baker, who was prominent in the early history of Enfield's Polish community, was not related to me. Frank Gwozdz, the organist, however, was my great-uncle.

It is a remarkable fact of St. Adalbert's history that, in three-quarters of a century, the parish has had only three pastors. Each differed in their style of leadership and made their own contributions to the progress of the parish. You will notice that this distinction has made it possible for me to neatly divide the history of the parish, since its founding, into three parts; each part corresponds to the years served by a particular pastor, i.e. "The Federkiewicz Years."

A PLACE OF THEIR OWN

The title of this book summarizes, in my opinion, the attitude that led to the creation and early development of St. Adalbert's Church. The Poles in Enfield simply wanted to have "a place of their own" in which to worship and grow spiritually. It was very important to them that there be a place in America where they could continue to speak with God in Polish.

It is likely, in fact, it is hoped, that this history will bring to the surface material that was not discovered at the time of its writing. If you have photographs or pieces of information not contained in this book, do not hesitate to bring them forward. They can be used in the future.

This history is as good as the material that has been found. It is hardly exhaustive. Hopefully it only begins to preserve the rich history of St. Adalbert's and is not the last word.

REV. JOHN P. GWOZDZ

CHAPTER ONE

YEARS OF SETTLEMENT AND ORGANIZATION 1902 - 1915

If a word could be used to describe the early Polish settlers of Enfield it would be “ambitious.” In less than twenty years these immigrants had managed to organize themselves into a strong and vibrant community. They placed their hopes for a better life in a section of Enfield called Thompsonville and set out to become as self-sufficient as possible. Polish groceries, bakeries and dry goods stores quickly sprouted in Thompsonville’s north side. The hardships of being strangers in a strange land were eased somewhat by the social clubs and benevolent societies they established. Construction of the Polish National Home, for years the largest hall in Enfield, was a remarkable achievement for such a small community of immigrants. It was with this same ambitious spirit that these early Polish settlers were motivated to establish a spiritual home of their own: St. Adalbert’s.

Poles first arrived in Thompsonville at the invitation of the Bigelow-Hartford Carpet Company (as it was then known) in July, 1902. Jan Pachorek, Antoni Prajzner and Jozef Wojnar of Chicopee, Massachusetts were recruited as part of a scheme by Bigelow management to break up a strike for higher wages that was in progress at the dye house.¹ They were preceded by Italian immigrants hired for that same purpose. The use of immigrants to settle labor disputes was an unfortunate but common practice of manufacturers at the time. According to one account, immigrants were brought through strike lines in trains.² Needless to say, both Poles and Italians came to Enfield in less than favorable circumstances and acceptance by the rest of the community was not readily forthcoming.

Sixteen more Poles arrived in May, 1903. They also were recruited by the Bigelow-Hartford but this time to satisfy a demand for labor brought about by a recent major expansion of the carpet mill. In 1901 the Hartford Carpet Company of Thompsonville merged with the E. S. Higgins Carpet Company of New York City to form the Bigelow-Hartford Carpet Company. The Higgins operation was moved to Thompsonville; this resulted in the construction of three new buildings including the 900 foot long Tapestry Mill which lined Pleasant Street until it was demolished in 1988. This expansion anticipated a growing demand for carpeting in American homes. A thriving economy led to an increase in housing construction, and carpeting became the favored floor-covering. As it turned out, the Bigelow-Hartford was aggressively bringing Greek, Armenian, Italian and Polish laborers into Thompsonville just when the output of American carpet companies had reached its peak in 1904. By 1910 the work force at the mill was three times what it had been in 1900.³



Working at the carpet looms. (From the Enfield Historical Society Collection)

Neighborhoods in Thompsonville were unable to absorb the growing number of immigrants, so the Bigelow-Hartford began its own massive housing program in 1902. One-hundred and two houses were constructed by 1904, containing about a hundred tenements.⁴ Many more houses were built in the years that followed. The sixteen Poles who arrived in May, 1903 were given the keys to company housing on Tariff Street.⁵ Andrzej Maciolek, one of the sixteen, turned the building into a boarding house for the immigrants to occupy. Among these early Polish settlers were Mr. Maciolek's wife and two daughters, and some young girls recruited by the Bigelow-Hartford from Chicopee, Ludlow, and Indian Orchard, all in Massachusetts. Among these girls was Katarzyna Korona, said to be the first Polish woman to arrive in Thompsonville. Several men were also recruited. The first of these men was Wladyslaw Szetela, from Chicopee. He went on to establish a meat market, and also had the distinction of being the first Pole in Thompsonville to obtain American citizenship. He was followed by Aleksander Niemiec who later ran a grocery store, Antoni Javorski who opened a dry goods store in 1904, Jozef Prajzner, and Jan Gwozdz who established a bakery in 1909. Javorski's store and Gwozdz's bakery became landmarks in the neighborhood and remained in family hands until both closed in the late 1970's. Mrs. Katarzyna Kaczynska, a widow with children, also lived on Tariff Street. The family of Mr. and Mrs. Franciszek Wrazien occupied a house on Martin Street. The following year, the number of Polish immigrants in Enfield grew to several hundred. Most settled in the north end of Thompsonville in the neighborhood called "Frenchtown" because of the French- Canadians who first lived there.

The vast majority of Enfield's Polish settlers came from the southeastern region of Poland known as Galicia. In the late eighteenth century the Polish nation was partitioned between Germany, Russia and Austria. Thus, it disappeared from the political map of Europe. Galicia fell under Austrian control



When Poles first arrived, they occupied housing provided by the Bigelow-Hartford Carpet Company in Thompsonville's north end. (From the Enfield Historical Society Collection)

until Poland regained independence in 1918. In the marriage records of St. Patrick's Church in Thompsonville, a Polish person's place of origin is often listed as "Galicia" or "Austria."

In 1848 the feudal system in Galicia was abolished by the Austrian government. Freed from their status as serfs, peasants in Polish Galicia gained access to some of the land once owned by the nobility. Unfortunately the amount of farmable land grew scarce as it was divided, and divided again, from one generation to another.⁶ Faced with the possibility of not having enough land to live on, many peasants in Galicia had to look elsewhere for employment. Thus began the massive migrations from Galicia and other parts of Poland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For some peasants, the pressure to leave was intensified because of an unwillingness to serve in the military of the occupying power, be it Russian, Austrian or German.

The tide of emigration from Galicia began in 1875 and reached its peak in 1910. America was the favored destination, although some peasants went no further than Germany or France. Others went to Brazil and South Africa. So massive had this drain on the population become that it raised the concerns of the Austrian government and Galician bishops. According to a study by Rev. Boleslaw Kumor, a deliberate effort was made to discourage Poles from leaving.⁷ Peasants were warned of the hazards that awaited them in foreign lands: the possibility of failure and consequent impoverishment, exploitation by employers, and spiritual and moral decline because of inadequate pastoral care. It is likely that the Poles who settled in Enfield were subjected to some of this pressure. The fact that few heeded these warnings indicated just how bad conditions had become for the Polish peasants. Eventually, the practice of discouraging emigration gave way to efforts to ensure the care and protection of Poles abroad.

Not all emigration was permanent. Some Poles left with the intention of returning once they had earned enough money to assure a better standard of living back in the homeland. Most emigrants to America, however, remained, satisfied with the economic security and political freedom they found

there. The ambitious spirit of Enfield's Polish settlers indicated that most had come to stay. The marriage records of St. Patrick's list just a few of the many towns and villages in Galicia they had left behind: Lisow, Siedliska, Rogoznica, Kamien, Kurczenkie, Korczyna, Synkowa, Rubyca, Sanazowe and Ruda. They were also known to have come from Krosno, Frysztak, Mielec and Medrzechow. For many Poles, Enfield was not the first place of settlement in America. As indicated earlier, some were lured from Chicopee, Ludlow and Indain Orchard by the employment opportunities in Thompsonville. This may explain why the Polish community in Enfield tended to have more contact with Polish enclaves northward rather than those to the south in cities such as New Britain.

It should also be noted that not every Pole in Enfield continued to work at the carpet mill. Some went into business for themselves, establishing markets and other services ranging from midwifery to automobile repair. Other Poles were attracted to Enfield's vast acreage, especially in the Hazardville section. They took advantage of the opportunity to return to the type of work they knew best but had been denied in the old country: farming.

It wasn't long after their arrival in Enfield that the Poles looked for a place to nourish the spiritual life that was so important to them. Naturally they turned to St. Patrick's Church, the only Catholic church in Thompsonville and just a short walk from their homes. It was there, more than anywhere else, however, that these immigrants experienced what was perhaps their greatest cultural crisis. As might be expected, no one at St. Patrick's spoke their language or knew their customs. No one was equipped to hear their confessions, to preach to them or to lead their devotions. They quickly realized that, unlike in Chicopee, in Enfield they were true pioneers, the first Polish presence in that town; they would have to adjust accordingly. In other areas of life these early settlers were able to manage quite well; but the kind of spiritual care they expected was beyond their immediate control, and obtaining it would prove to be a complicated matter.

The frustrations of those early years were strong, and they linger in the memories of some the older parishioners even today. The clergy at St. Patrick's was not prepared to handle the sudden influx of Poles and Italians who came to worship. Evidence of this confusion can be found in the sacramental records. Many Polish last names and some first names are hard to decipher. Some names, apparently, were recorded according to the way they sounded or how they appeared in signatures. One could only imagine the kinds of rectory visits the pastor, Rev. Thomas J. Preston, and his assistant, Rev. Terence J. Dunn, had with the Polish and Italian newcomers. Remembered also, however, were attempts by these priests to be accommodating. Mrs. Josephine Kiszka tells the story of how her father, Andrzej Maciolek, took the initiative one day and brought one of the priests from house to house for the traditional Polish blessing of Easter food, the "swieconka."⁸ Twice a year, Fr. Preston also invited a Polish priest to come to Thompsonville.

The frustrations these early Polish parishioners of St. Patrick's experienced were not enough to prevent them from donating a window for the new brownstone church building which had been under construction when they first arrived. In the program commemorating the dedication of the new St. Patrick's Church on November 20, 1904 it was noted that the King David window was "...donated by Polish members of St. Patrick's congregation,"⁹ a remarkable gesture considering that Poles had begun worshiping there little more than two years earlier. The window, unfortunately, was destroyed in a fire that gutted the church in 1949.

The first baptism of a child of Polish heritage recorded in the register of St. Patrick's was that of Micieslaus Wrazien, child of Thomas Wrazien and Julia Jacubiec, in April, 1903 (no day given); the sponsors were Andrzej Maciolek and Julia Cybulska, and the sacrament was administered by Rev. Terence J. Dunn. The first recorded marriage of a Polish couple was that of Paul Tupaj and Katarzyna

Korona on September 7, 1903, witnessed by Jan Zazutack (spelling?) and Anna Praesnor (Prajzner?), and officiated by Rev. Thomas J. Preston. This Katarzyna Korona was also, most likely, the same one by that name who was mentioned earlier as the first Polish woman to arrive in Thompsonville.

If they were to protect their interests, the members of the Enfield Polish community knew that they would have to organize and work together. By 1904 they had become large enough to do so. The founding of the Krakusy Society, or Society of Free Krakovians, on October 4, 1904, marked the first time Poles had formally organized in Enfield.¹⁰ A benevolent society, the Krakusy provided life insurance for its members, thereby protecting the widow or orphans left behind in the event of death. Members and their families also received assistance in times of illness. The first officers were Wladyslaw Szetela, president; Anastazy Chabinowski, vice-president; Aleksander Niemiec, secretary; and Stanislaw Rypysc, treasurer.



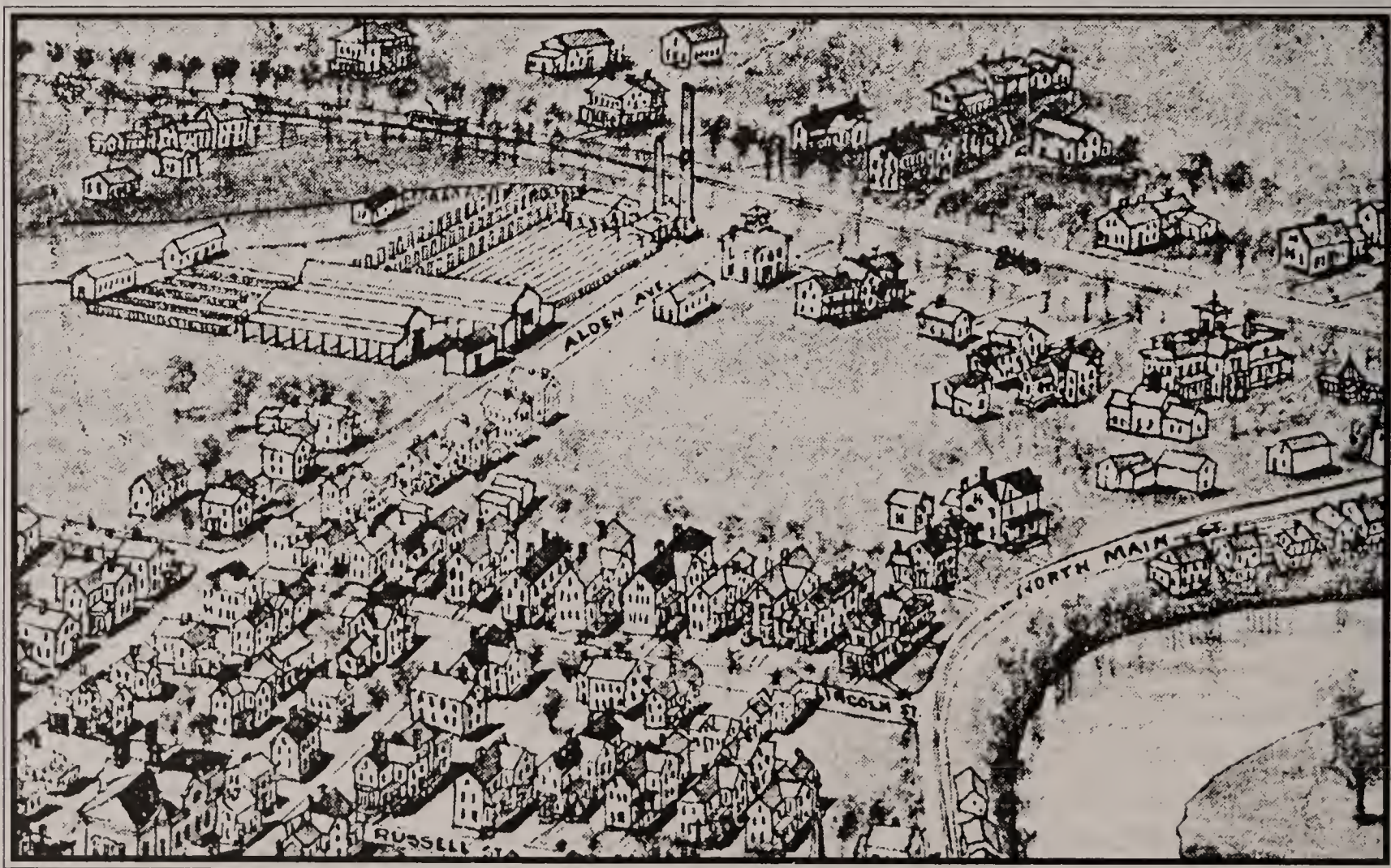
The Krakusy Society, shown here celebrating their fifteenth anniversary in 1919, were instrumental in the founding of St. Adalbert's parish. Fr. Federkiewicz is in the center of the group. (Provided by Stella Bajek)

The problems of Enfield's early Polish community also led the Krakusy to consider seriously, for the first time, the idea of establishing a Polish National Home Association and a Catholic parish. The National Home would provide a place for Poles in Thompsonville to address their cultural needs. A Polish parish would take care of what they found lacking at St. Patrick's. The fact that these immigrants were even able to consider such an ambitious undertaking so soon after their arrival, and well beyond their financial capabilities, illustrates well their faith in the future, their faith in Thompsonville and their faith in God. They sincerely believed that God had blessed their desire to retain a Polish identity in a foreign land. As one early historical sketch of St. Adalbert's puts it, in the homeland, worship was

in Polish "...jak Pan Bog przykazal," (as God commanded),¹¹ and so it would be in America.

Firm in their desire to have a parish of their own, but also aware of their small size and even smaller resources, Thompsonville's Poles decided to ask the Bishop of Hartford for a Polish priest when an elected delegation met with the Most Rev. Michael J. Tierney in early 1907.¹² Polish immigrants in Connecticut were very well aware that the diocese with which they were dealing was strongly Irish in character and not likely to be sympathetic with their ethnic aspirations. A study by Dolores A. Liptak, however, argues that such a blanket statement cannot be made, especially in the case of the Hartford diocese.¹³ The new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe as well as French Canada who flooded the diocese were, she says, very much on the minds of the bishops. In fact, the Hartford diocese was a pioneer in the aggressive and imaginative way it addressed the immigrant situation. Bishop Tierney, for example, personally visited Poland in 1903 asking the bishops there for priests. When none were available, he sent his own priests and seminarians to Poland to learn the language and culture. It was one of these priests-trained-abroad that Bishop Tierney sent in response to the request by the Thompsonville Polish community. The appointment to St. Patrick's of Rev. Paul J. Piechocki, newly ordained and not yet twenty-three years old, took effect on September 1, 1907 although records show that he had already officiated at a marriage on August 31.

Fr. Piechocki had an immediate impact on how the Polish parishioners of St. Patrick's were served. Every subsequent Polish wedding and baptism was placed in his hands (and even a few Italian ones). The sacramental records of Polish persons became legible and more complete. Regular Masses for Poles were scheduled in the lower church of St. Patrick's known as St. Michael's Chapel. In Fr. Piechocki, the Poles of Thompsonville had finally found a spiritual shepherd who spoke their language, understood their needs and sympathized with their frustrations.



This aerial view is taken from a larger drawing of Thompsonville done by Hughes and Bailey in 1908, just six years after the first Polish settlers arrived. In the center is vacant land that was later purchased for St. Adalbert's. Across Alden Avenue can be seen the Brower and Best brickyards which supplied material for the upper church. (From the Enfield Historical Society Collection)

Although of Polish background, Fr. Piechocki was not an immigrant himself. Born in Meriden, Connecticut on September 7, 1884, he was the first Polish-American seminarian to study at St. Thomas Seminary, then in Hartford. At the request of Bishop Tierney, Piechocki completed his seminary studies in Tarnow, Poland (in Galicia) and it was in that city he was ordained a priest on June 29, 1907. He was the first Connecticut native of Polish background to be ordained for the Diocese of Hartford.¹⁴ Two months later he received his Thompsonville assignment.

Even today Fr. Piechocki is spoken of fondly by those few parishioners who remember him. He pursued his ministry with all the vigor of a young priest. Fr. Piechocki sympathized with the Poles under his care who desired a parish of their own. Indeed, it was through his efforts that on October 6, 1910 Bishop John J. Nilan, Tierney's successor, purchased land on Alden Avenue from Martha J. Alden for such a possibility. Before he was transferred from Thompsonville in 1911, Fr. Piechocki managed to raise \$2,000 intended for the construction of a church building once the establishment of a parish was approved. In 1912 Fr. Piechocki became the founding pastor of St. Stanislaus Church in Waterbury. Apparently the leadership abilities he had first demonstrated in Thompsonville were recognized and put to good use. He died on December 9, 1953.

On July 6, 1911 Rev. John J. McCabe assumed ministry to the Polish community at St. Patrick's. Even though he was not Polish himself, Fr. McCabe had a rare ability to take an active interest in a group of immigrants who were not of his own background. A native of New Britain, Fr. McCabe began his studies at Holy Cross College in Worcester. After graduation, he continued his priestly training in Lembert, Austria and, while there, went to Poland to study its customs and became fluent in its language. Before coming to St. Patrick's, he ministered to the Polish community in Jewett City, Connecticut. Poles in Thompsonville came to appreciate Fr. McCabe's efforts and noted how "... he preached the homily in Polish the best he could, listened to their confessions in Polish, visited the sick and administered the sacraments."¹⁵ Recognized for his administrative abilities, Fr. McCabe returned as pastor to St. Mary's Church in Jewett City soon after St. Adalbert's was founded. He went on to St. Joseph's Church in Shelton and died on February 22, 1944.

The efforts of Bishops Tierney and Nilan notwithstanding, the Polish community in Thompsonville held on to the idea of having a parish of their own, guided by a pastor of their own stock. Feeling their condition had improved since they met with Bishop Tierney, they sent a delegation to meet now with Bishop Nilan consisting of Jan Gwozdz, Jozef Prajzner, Andrzej Maciolek, Stanislaw Rypysc, Wladyslaw Szetela and Antoni Ziemnicki.¹⁶ By this time Bishop Nilan was feeling pressure from other Polish communities who also wanted parishes of their own. On one occasion, Poles in some Connecticut towns took their grievances directly to Rome. A letter dated September 29, 1913 from Archbishop Bonzano, the papal Apostolic Delegate in Washington D. C., informed Bishop Nilan that Poles in his diocese sent a report to the Sacred Congregation of Concistory in Rome claiming that Poles in Plantsville, New London, Stamford, Moodus, Suffield, Thompsonville, Collinsville and Torrington

...are neglected, that notwithstanding their numerous petitions to the Bishop, they are denied a Polish priest, that they are not allowed to build a church, although they have gathered money for it, that they have to pay for admission to the church, and that a fee of \$25 is imposed upon them for the Sacrament of Matrimony and of \$4 for that of Baptism.¹⁷

Archbishop Bonzano mentioned that he had enough information about Poles in Plantsville, New London and Stamford to respond to these accusations but he requested a report on the Poles in the other towns including Thompsonville. Bishop Nilan's reply, dated October 1, 1913, preserves for us a revealing description of the situation in those other towns, at least from his point of view. Concerning

Thompsonville the bishop wrote:

An attempt was made about two years ago to form a parish for the Poles of this place. The present bishop purchased a lot advancing one-half the purchase money from diocesan funds and proceeded to organize the parish under the pastorate of a priest of Polish parentage. At this juncture, a delegation representing a society, which here as in most Polish communities forms and controls the opinion of the multitude, demanded that the church property be held by a committee appointed by their society in a manner contrary to civil as well as diocesan law. They also insisted that the handling of all funds and the details of church building should be confided to them. I have not been notified that they have receded from their position. They remain as formerly under the care of a Polish-speaking assistant in the jurisdiction of the pastor of the mixed parish. I have reason to believe that they are satisfied with his ministration.¹⁸

Referring to all the Polish communities mentioned in Bonzano's letter, Bishop Nilan added that

...with regard to the accusations of extorting money, I beg to say that in all these cases charges are recklessly made without any facts to substantiate them. No effort has ever been made by these people to prove directly to me that such an abuse exists in this diocese.¹⁹

The delegation from Thompsonville met with the bishop several times. There is no indication that all the grievances made to Rome applied to the situation in Thompsonville. The Polish community there did, however, need to be reminded that all matters pertaining to church property and funds fell under the control of the diocese. As with all church land, for example, the deed for the lot on Alden Avenue was granted to Bishop Nilan and no one else. The bishop's headaches, however, were far greater across the river in Suffield where Poles had purchased land for a church without his permission.²⁰ Another concern was the possibility that he would lose some Poles in his diocese to the schismatic Polish National Catholic Church.

Perhaps realizing that pressures from various Polish communities would not subside, Bishop Nilan announced that, in 1915, three Polish parishes would be established in towns, presumably where he thought they had the best chance of success: Southington (Plantsville), New London and Thompsonville. A formal announcement of the decision was made to the Thompsonville Polish community on April 26, 1914 and reported in *The Catholic Transcript* :

The Rev. J. J. McCabe, assistant rector of St. Patrick's Thompsonville, read at Mass Sunday a letter from Bishop Nilan of Hartford, in which he set forth his intention to proceed with a division of the parish and the establishment of a separate church for the Polish people. This matter was considered several years ago, and about three years ago a tract of land on Alden Avenue was purchased as the site for a Polish parish but owing to circumstances which developed nothing further has been done until the announcement on Sunday. It is estimated that there are about 1,200 Polish people connected with St. Patrick's Church and it will be necessary for them to demonstrate their interest in the project for the separate church by raising for expenses contingent to the establishment of a parish. The Poles held a general meeting Sunday evening in St. Michael's Chapel at which the Rev. Father McCabe again read the letter from Bishop Nilan and also explained in detail the proper method of procedure.²¹

The dream was now becoming a reality and Poles in Thompsonville must have been filled with



Many of the men in this 1923 photograph of the directors of the Polish National Home Association were also prominent in the early years of St. Adalbert's. From left to right top row: Antoni Ziemnicki, Jozef Prajzner, A. Piotrowski, M. Buczkowski, Stefan Cybulski. Middle row: Wawrzyniec Kiszka, Antoni Pepek, Antoni Javorski, Franciszek Pilch, Andrzej Maciolek, Wladyslaw Koziol. Bottom row: Aleksander Cybulski, Wojciech Klimek, Aleksander Niemiec, Piotr Jedziniak. (From booklet provided by Sophie Guminski)

elation but also some anxiety as the responsibility of maintaining a parish fell on their shoulders. As the Transcript article noted, it was now up to the Polish community in Thompsonville to support their ambitious spirit with dollars and hard work.

Of the three Polish parishes Bishop Nilan announced he would create in 1915, the one serving the Thompsonville community was the first to be formally established. Placed under the patronage of one of Poland's oldest saints, St. Adalbert, Bishop and Martyr, (known in Polish as Sw. Wojciech), the parish was begun on January 17, 1915 when Rev. Stanislaus (Stanislaw) Federkiewicz assumed charge as its first pastor.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FEDERKIEWICZ YEARS 1915 - 1938

When he arrived in Thompsonville, the Reverend Stanislaus Federkiewicz had been a priest for little more than two and a half years. The rest of his life, however, would be spent guiding the fledgling parish of St. Adalbert's and bringing it to maturity. Born in Rymanow in Galician Poland on April 25, 1886, Federkiewicz had a sister and brother (Dominic) who both later lived in Chicago, and two other brothers: John who was a physician in Boston, and Peter, a priest in Poland. Federkiewicz attended college in Sanok and Przemyśl Poland before coming to America as a young man in 1906. He entered St. Thomas Seminary, then on Collins Street in Hartford, during his junior year. There, with help from some of his classmates, Federkiewicz became acquainted with the English language. It has been said that Patrick J. Dolan, who went on to become the pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Suffield, gave him formal English instruction.²² While at St. Thomas', Federkiewicz also made some friends, among them George Bartlewski, whose brother Paul was to succeed Federkiewicz as pastor at St. Adalbert's. Monsignor George Bartlewski recalled in an interview that Federkiewicz was "clever" in the classics and well versed in both ancient and modern history: "He knew history upside down."²³ For Federkiewicz, studying ancient history was a favorite hobby although he also had a fondness for the history of Poland. "He was a good talker," Bartlewski noted, and his Polish was excellent. He always spoke English, however, with a heavy accent.

In 1909 Stanislaus Federkiewicz was graduated from St. Thomas Seminary and went on to St. John's Seminary in Brighton, Massachusetts. He completed his priestly studies at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland and was ordained in the cathedral of that city by Cardinal James Gibbons on June 21, 1912. Fr. Federkiewicz's first assignment was as an assistant pastor to Sacred Heart Church in New Britain where he served from June 28 to September 7, 1912. He later became assistant pastor at St. Andrew's Church in Colchester, and on February 5, 1914 went to St. Mary's Star-of-the-Sea Church in New London. It was while he was in New London that young Federkiewicz learned of his pastoral appointment to St. Adalbert's.

Fr. Federkiewicz arrived in Thompsonville on Thursday, January 14, 1915, three days before he formally took charge of the new parish. He went to work immediately, baptizing two infants on the very day of his arrival. The first baptism appearing in the records of St. Adalbert's was that of Franciszek Borys, child of Andrzej Borys and Maria Ofiara, on January 14, 1915. The godparents were Jan Bak and Julia

Mesik (?). On the very same day Federkiewicz baptized Jan (?) Laczynski, child of Aleksander Laczynski and Maria (no maiden name given). Ninety-eight more baptisms followed that year. Days after his arrival, Fr. Federkiewicz officiated at the first marriages in St. Adalbert's, that of Stefan Kogut and Sophia Kokieski (Klocot), on January 18, 1915, and Stanislaw Muzyka and Maria Snopek the next day. That year forty-eight more weddings took place.

At this time, of course, St. Adalbert's parish continued to worship in the lower church of St. Patrick's called St. Michael's Chapel. Construction of a building of their own, however, began as soon as possible. Bishop Nilan authorized parishioners to build only what they could afford at the time. This allowed for construction of the basement portion alone. On February 25, 1915, *The Catholic Transcript* reported that "...plans are being drawn and as soon as accepted construction will begin in the early spring."²⁴ It was not until June 10, however, that the Transcript was able to report that "...on Wednesday the Rev. Stanislaus Federkiewicz turned the first spade of dirt and the work of excavation is now going on with dispatch."²⁵

From the beginning, parishioners demonstrated their commitment to this project by digging out most of the basement themselves. According to one story, Jan Gwozdz, who ran the bakery mentioned earlier, went about the neighborhood recruiting volunteers who assembled on the Alden Avenue site with shovels ready for digging. He also devised a plow with a scoop attached to help in the excavation. The plow was pulled by his own horses.²⁶

Construction of the basement church proceeded rapidly as the massive granite walls began to rise. A huge crowd assembled on October 10, 1915 for the blessing of the cornerstone. *The Catholic Transcript* provided the following description of the event:

The cornerstone of St. Adalbert's new Polish church in Thompsonville, which was laid a few weeks ago, was blessed Sunday in the presence of about 2,000 people, three fourths of whom were members of the parish. Owing to the fact that Bishop Nilan was engaged elsewhere, he authorized the pastor, the Rev. Stanislaus Federkiewicz, to perform the ceremonies, and he was assisted by several Polish priests from the diocese. The sermon was preached by the Rev. Maximillian Soltyssek of Rockville, who took for his text "The Church." A box was placed in the cornerstone containing the customary diocesan documents, the names of the Pope, Bishop and pastor of the parish, also the name of the president of the United States, coins and newspapers. It is expected that the basement of the church will be ready for occupancy in about a month.²⁷

Actually more than two months passed before parishioners were able to worship for the first time in their own building. Fr. Federkiewicz was determined to celebrate Mass there on Christmas Day, 1915; he got his wish even though the church was not yet finished. Mrs. Josephine Kiszka, who remembers the day, said that parishioners didn't even bother to unpack the pews and altar.²⁸ Adults simply sat on the unopened crates while children stood. A crate also served as the altar. It can be said with some pride that every Christmas Mass celebrated by St. Adalbert's parish from the year of its founding took place on its



Rev. Stanislaus Federkiewicz

own property.

On Sunday, May 7, 1916, the lower church was finally ready to be dedicated by Bishop Nilan. Before the ceremony, Polish societies from Thompsonville, and societies and bands from Hartford and Ludlow paraded through the neighborhood. The dedication Mass was celebrated by the Rev. Timothy Crowley LL. D. of New London with whom Fr. Federkiewicz served as a curate before coming to Thompsonville. The sermon, given in Polish and delivered by Rev. Franciszek Wladasz of Suffield, was entitled "Fidelity to the Church and Country." Bishop Nilan also made an address.²⁹

No photograph can be found of the interior of this basement church, but those who recall say that it contained a number of the furnishings which were later moved upstairs: parts of the main altar, pews (which continued to be used upstairs until renovations in 1965), and the statues of Mary and St. Adalbert. Along the walls were little square Stations of the Cross. The Annual Report filed with the diocese for the year 1915 indicated that a \$17,000 mortgage had been taken out for the construction of the basement church, \$754 was spent for the pews and \$120 for the altar. Photographs of the outside show a flat roof except for the area where the bell tower now stands. This square was covered by a wooden pyramid topped by a cross, a small gesture to anyone passing by to indicate that this was indeed a church. It was in this basement church that St. Adalbert's parish spent its formative years. Meanwhile a house on the corner of North Main and Lincoln Streets served as a rectory. This house later became the home of the Enfield Visiting Nurse Association, until it was demolished for urban renewal in the mid-1970's. The present rectory was completed in 1920.

The 1915 Annual Report indicated that the new parish had a membership of 1,352 persons (602 male and 750 female). The first trustees of St. Adalbert's were Andrzej Maciolek and Stanislaw Rypysc. Ordinary and extra-ordinary income totalled \$7,430.50 while expenditures added up to \$24,611.40, most due to construction costs and mortgage payments. Thus began a condition of debt that has characterized much of St. Adalbert's history. According to Dr. Joseph Javorski, whose father was among the first settlers and a prominent businessman, many early parishioners were not in a hurry to pay off the mortgage. They reasoned that financial support of the parish should not rest on their shoulders alone. It was entirely appropriate, in their opinion, that a mortgage would extend this responsibility to future generations.³⁰ Not enough could be said, however, about the many sacrifices the early parishioners of St. Adalbert's made on behalf of their church. Even as they struggled to support their own families with the "nickles and dimes" earned mostly at "the Bigelow," they felt a strong sense of responsibility towards their treasured parish family. At the same time support for



A postcard view of the basement church and the house on the corner of North Main and Lincoln Streets which served as the first rectory. (Provided by Rev. Frank T. Carter)

the church was seen by many as support for their own spiritual and social welfare.

The St. Cecilia Choir, named after the patron saint of music, was organized soon after St. Adalbert's was founded. The first organist was a Mr. Blum, of whom little is known. After a few years he was succeeded by Mary Javorski. She was the daughter of Antoni Javorski, mentioned earlier, and, in 1916, became the first girl of Polish background to graduate from Enfield High School. Miss Javorski went on to Smith College and studied under Ralph Baldwin, an eminent musician. She left Enfield in 1939 to become the organist of a Polish parish in Adams, Massachusetts.³¹



The first St. Cecilia's Choir. Only the last names are available. From left to right, top row: Zielinski, Piotrowski, Renczewicz, Guzowski, Ludwin, Szredzinski, Jakubus. Middle row: Samborski, Gwozdz, Zielinski, Blum (organist), Zielinski, Kalwa, unknown, Pepek. Bottom row: Kalwa, Krol, Rarus, unknown, Rarus, Jarosz, Sienko. (Provided by Josephine Kiszka)

A new benevolent society was organized on March 28, 1915: the St. Adalbert Society of Brotherly Help, founded by Jan Gwozdz, Wojciech Rzeszos, Piotr Tenerowicz, Andrzej Maciolek and Stanislaw Rypysc. Besides providing financial assistance, its stated purpose was to "...spread unity, agreement and enlightenment among brothers."³²

First communions were not annual events at St. Adalbert's in the early years, and confirmations were even rarer. The first of the communion classes was prepared in 1916 and consisted of thirteen boys and twenty-three girls. A second class was not formed until 1919. Confirmation was administered for the first time at St. Adalbert's on November 21, 1920 to thirty-eight boys and sixty-eight girls. The next class would have to wait until 1929.



The first communion class in 1916. In the center is Fr. Federkiewicz. The man on the far left is one of his brothers, and on the far right is the first organist, Mr. Blum. (Provided by Andrew Prayzner)

While St. Adalbert's was taking its first steps as a parish, World War I raged across Europe. America's entry into that war in 1917 provided many immigrants, including Poles, an opportunity to shake off their identity as foreigners and demonstrate loyalty to their adopted country. Notices in English, Polish and Italian were posted all over Enfield warning males between the ages of twenty-one and thirty to register with the local draft board on Tuesday, June 5, 1917. It wasn't long afterwards that St. Adalbert's found itself caught up in the fervor of a nation mobilized for war. The Annual Report of 1918 indicated that two special collections were taken in the parish for Liberty Bonds and totalled \$200. The Society of Mothers of Polish Soldiers was organized to provide assistance to servicemen and their families. These women sent packages and wrote letters to assure soldiers that they were not forgotten.³³ Many Poles from Enfield served with American forces, but a number joined an army of Poles formed in 1917 which fought in France under the command of General Jozef Haller. An article in the *Thompsonville Press* with the headline "St. Adalbert's Church Unfurls Service Flag" gave a colorful account of how the young parish gathered on July 28, 1918 to send some of these men off to war:

With appropriate exercises, the new service flag of St. Adalbert's Polish Church, containing 22 stars, representing the members of the parish who have entered either the American or Polish armies, was blessed last Sunday morning at the 10:30 o'clock service in the church. The service consisted of a high Mass which was celebrated by the pastor, Rev. Stanislaus Federkiewicz, who also delivered a special sermon in which he paid tribute to the young men

who are offering their lives to the cause of freedom. Special music was given by the choir under the direction of the organist Miss Mary Javorski.

After the church service a street parade was given, led by the Carpet City band, in which several hundred Polish men and women took part, as well as the six recruits who volunteered their services in the Polish army. The parade disbanded at the Polish Falcon Hall where a patriotic rally was held at which remarks were made by Rev. Stanislaus Federkiewicz, Selectman Albert J. Epstein, Dr. Thomas G. Alcorn chairman of the local draft board, and Sergeant Thomas Zielinski of the Hartford recruiting station, and by Lieut. W. Korzen of Hartford, organizer of the Polish forces.

The addresses were interspersed with readings by Miss Annie Leach of Hartford, songs by the women's auxiliary society and with patriotic selections by the Carpet City band. The young men who volunteered left early in the evening for a training camp at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada. They were Albert Karona, Peter Gwozdz, Anthony Pelczar, Andre Paja and Joseph Witkas, all members of St. Adalbert's parish. Each was presented with a \$10.00 bill, and a similar amount was forwarded to Wladyslaw Prajzner, who enlisted a few days ago.³⁴

Enfield's Polish community was fortunate in that it lost none of its sons during the war. Antoni (Anthony) Pelczar, mentioned above, remained in the Polish Army to protect the independence Poland regained in 1918. He died on May 8, 1920 during one of the Polish battles with the Bolsheviks.³⁵

The Thompsonville post of the United Veterans of the Polish Army was established in 1921.³⁶ Membership was also extended to Poles who served in the American forces. The veterans organized numerous memorial gatherings and patriotic celebrations in the post-war years. They also maintained an interest in the affairs of Poland as it struggled to preserve its independence. In 1934 the Thompsonville post hosted a gathering of Polish Army veterans from Connecticut and Massachusetts for a blessing of flags.

"Przestroga"

Registracja w Stanach Zjednoczonych!

**Wszyscy mężczyźni, pomiędzy 21szym a 31
tym - pierwszym rokiem mają się stawić do
biura registryjnego we wtorek**

DNIA 5 CZERWCA 1917.

**Pomiędzy godz. 7rano a 9tą wieczór w
miejscu głosowania przy wyborach i tak:**

No. 1 na Town Hall, Enfield street.

No. 2 na sali Court room, Thompsonville.

No. 3 Instytut w Hazardville.

**Temu prawu podpadają wszyscy męż-
czyźni którzy przed 5 albo na 5 czerwca 1917
skończyli 21rok a nie przekroczyli 31go roku.**

**Przekraczający to prawo podpadnie karze
jeden rok aresztu.**

Wydz. Komlasy Registryjna Na Enfield Conn.

ALBERT J. EPSTEIN.

J. HAMILTON POTTER.

JAMES T. BURGESS.

SYLVESTER L. MITCHELL.

This notice told Poles when and where to register for the draft as America prepared to enter the First World War. (From the Enfield Historical Society Collection)

If Enfield's Polish community enjoyed a "golden age," it probably was the 1920's. The decade had a rocky beginning when a cut in wages at the Bigelow-Hartford led to a strike that, at one point, closed down the entire plant.³⁷ Strikers who lived in company housing were threatened with eviction. The matter was settled when workers reluctantly accepted a 20% pay cut. Wages gradually increased, however, as the business climate improved. In 1923 the Bigelow-Hartford completed the last of its major building projects in Thompsonville with the opening of the huge Axminster building on Whitworth Street. A number of Poles and other immigrants found it possible to move beyond the old neighborhoods. Many purchased lots and built their own houses, often multi-family dwellings which sometimes served as boarding homes.

It would go beyond the scope of this history to discuss at length the many new Polish organizations that sprouted after the First World War. Noteworthy was the establishment of the Maria Konopnicki Society on August 7, 1921, a benevolent group which provided insurance protection for women. It was also organized "...to promote harmony and friendship within the local Polish community, a sense of belonging among members, and equal opportunity for the Polish women of Thompsonville."³⁸ One can only speculate if this development was influenced by the movement for women's voting rights which took place in the years before. A short time later the Thadeus Kosciuszko Society, a benevolent group for men, was organized on October 17, 1921.³⁹ The establishment of these and other mutual assistance organizations illustrates, again, how willing Poles in Enfield were to set aside personal interests for the good of the community- an attitude that made St. Adalbert's possible. It should also be noted that immigrants were encouraged by Bigelow management to form social and athletic organizations to provide alternatives to the numerous saloons which lured many employees.⁴⁰ Space was given, for example, to the Polish Falcons, the second oldest organization of Poles in Enfield, to allow for basketball games and gymnastics.

Construction of the Polish National Home "Wawel," on the corner of Alden Avenue and Church Street, testified, in brick and mortar, to the vitality of social and cultural activities in the Polish community. As mentioned earlier, the Polish National Home was one-half of the two part dream of the Krakusy Society, establishment of St. Adalbert's was the other half. In 1913 the Society elected a committee to organize the Polish National Home Association: Piotr Cybulski, Jozef Prajzner, Aleksander Niemiec and Jan Gwozdz. The committee purchased an abandoned cornfield on April 22, 1913⁴¹ and proceeded to collect money for the building. This, most likely, put a strain on the resources of Poles who were also eager to move from the basement to a new upper church.

The new Polish National Home building was dedicated with impressive ceremony on July 1, 1923. It provided space for Polish stores and clubs on the first floor, and a large hall on the second floor where lectures and concerts featuring the music of Chopin and Paderewski were held.⁴² Bruno Wozny of Springfield was the architect and builder.

One of the rooms on the first floor of the Home was reserved for teaching the Polish language to the children of immigrants who were quickly becoming Americanized. A two-year program was developed and classes met three times a week. Finding teachers was difficult. Parishioners from St. Adalbert's often volunteered and they were occasionally helped by students from Poland who attended the American International College in Springfield.⁴³ Remembered from among the teachers were Mrs. Muzyka and Misters Augustiniak, Maziarz and Ramowski. The program also offered gymnastics in the hall upstairs. The school eventually closed in the 1930's, but it had created an interest in education that much later would lead to the establishment of St. Adalbert's School. The room where these classes were held, incidentally, was later occupied by Chester Nowak's pharmacy.

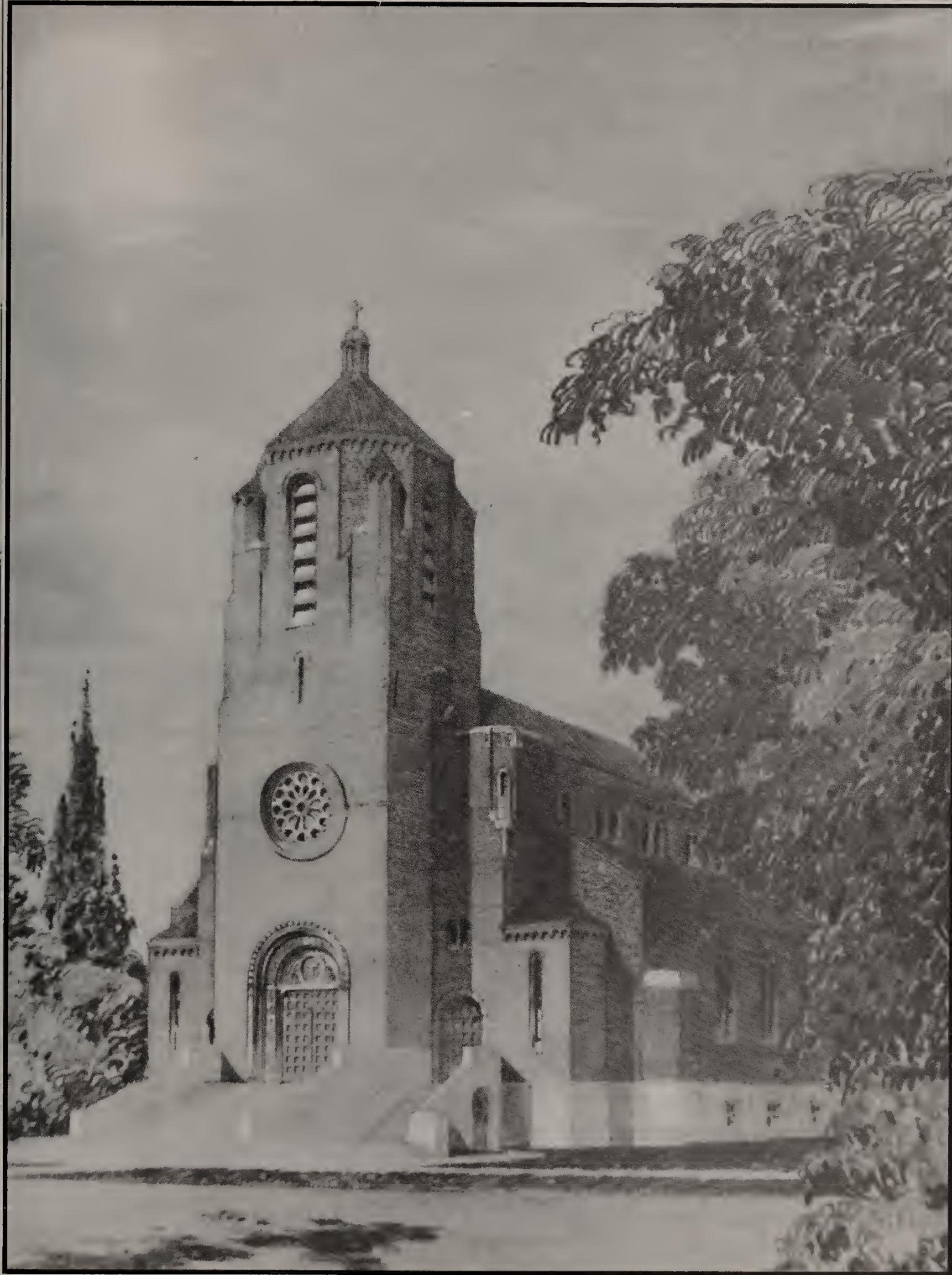


One of the many Polish classes that were conducted at the Polish National Home in the 1920's and early 30's. This class was instructed by Mr. Maziarz, top center. (Provided by Stanley Dynia)

While these developments were taking place in the Polish National Home, a short distance away on Alden Avenue, stood the basement church, a reminder that much work remained for the parishioners of St. Adalbert's. Mortgage payments were completed in 1925 and two years later it was determined that the parish was in a position to begin construction of the upper church. A drawing of the proposed design was prepared in 1927. Unfortunately, after much aggressive research, the name of the architect remains unknown. The Annual Report for 1927 shows that a special collection for the new building amounted to \$6,590 while a mortgage was taken out for \$75,000. Extraordinary income rose substantially between 1927 and 1931, perhaps indicating an increase in fund-raising activity. William Savage was hired as the building contractor. He didn't have to go far for bricks. The Brower and Best brickyards were just across the street. In fact, the upper church is made up of the last "B & B" bricks. Once the St. Adalbert's contract was filled, the company closed.

Soon iron framework towered over the basement church and curved beams outlined the vaulted ceiling. As brick was layed in the Flemish bond pattern outside, plaster workers gave definition to the interior. Finally, on July 8, 1928, the upper church was ready for dedication. *The Catholic Transcript* described the day's activities:

The new St. Adalbert's Church of Thompsonville was dedicated on Sunday, July 8, by Rt.



The architect's drawing for the upper church done in 1927.

Rev. Maurice F. McAuliffe, D. D. Auxilliary to the Bishop of Hartford. The edifice, which serves the spiritual needs of the Polish Catholics of that city, was erected at a cost of \$100,000. and has a seating capacity of seven hundred. Rev. Stanislaus Federkiewicz is pastor. Following the ceremony, Bishop McAuliffe briefly addressed the congregation. He paid high tribute to the zeal of Father Federkiewicz and warmly commended the parishioners for their fine spirit of cooperation. It was their sacrifice and deep interest in religion, he pointed out, that made possible the construction of a magnificent, new temple of worship. The exercises were attended by ten visiting priests.⁴⁴

Another perspective on the day is preserved in a report Enfield's late historian Ruth Bridge prepared concerning significant events that took place in Enfield in 1928 and 1929:

On July 8th St. Adalbert's Polish Church on Alden Ave. was dedicated. Over one thousand people attended the impressive ceremony, and many more were turned away for lack of room. The church is a building of which the town may well be proud. It is of brick, with limestone and artificial granite trimming and has at the front an octagonal tower 90 ft. high. The seating capacity is over 700. The style of the building having been suggested by a church in Poland, it presents a marked contrast to the other churches of the town.⁴⁵

Older parishioners verify the claim that the church was modeled on one Fr. Federkiewicz knew in Poland, but which church remains a mystery.

After worshiping for twelve and a half years in the basement church and even longer in the lower church of St. Patrick's, the parishioners of St. Adalbert's finally had a place worthy of their faith and spirit. Its most dramatic feature was the bell tower which began as a square and ended at the top with an eight-sided roof. The style was Romanesque which is characterized by rounded arches. At each end was a rose window. The back wall was flat, unusual because most churches of that style end with a rounded apse. The church was given three bells, donated, it has been said, by the Bigelow-Hartford. One bell was hung outside on top of the back wall while the other two were hung inside the tower. One of these two was made by the Vickers Company of England. The other was cast by the Meneely Company of Troy, New York in 1911.

Inside, the church was plain at first. Much of the decorative artwork was done in 1940. What was the main altar until the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, now serves as the place of reser-



*A card commemorating the dedication of the upper church on July 8, 1928.
(Provided by Alec Piorek)*



*A view of the Polish float and marchers parading down Pearl Street during the celebration of Enfield's 250th anniversary in June, 1930.
(From the Enfield Historical Society Collection)*

vation for the Blessed Sacrament. The reredos, that portion which stands against the wall, is crowned by an eight-sided dome that recalls the bell tower. The spaces along the back wall that now display portraits of the four evangelists, were originally open and channeled light from the three windows on the south side. The stained-glass windows of the lower walls contain portraits, many of Polish saints: Adalbert, Casimir, Hyacinth, Hedwig, Stanislaus Kostka and the Black Madonna of Czestochowa.

St. Adalbert's parishioners were fortunate in that they completed the upper church before the Great Depression, and unfortunate in that they subsequently were in no position to pay for it. In 1929 the Bigelow- Hartford merged with Stephen Sanford and Sons of Amsterdam, New York and became the Bigelow-Sanford Carpet Company. As the economic situation worsened, the company was hit hard. Carpet sales dropped, production levels fell, wages were cut and many workers were laid off.⁴⁶ The collection at St. Adalbert's hit an all-time low in 1932 and Fr. Federkiewicz had to borrow money extensively. As the collection improved debts were paid, but the mortgage remained. At no time did the fate of the Polish community affect the financial condition of the parish more than in those bleak years.

The celebration of Enfield's 250th anniversary in 1930 would not be mentioned in this history except for the fact that many local people were impressed by the participation of the Polish and Lithuanian communities. Both sent large contingents dressed in colorful native costumes to march in the parade.⁴⁷ They also worked for weeks on floats, the Polish one depicting a "Wedding in Poland." Perhaps these were ways for the Poles and Lithuanians to express gratitude to the town that had given



The first members of the St. Adalbert's Cadets, later the Drum and Bugle Corps, posing on the steps of SS. Cyril and Methodius Church in Hartford. From left to right, top row: Ben Jacubic, George Rypysc, Pepek, Adam Pierz, Joseph Zych, Joseph Korona, Stanley Korpusinski, Walter Podosek, Walter Borys, John Silanski. Middle row: Edward Salva, Frank Mastelicz, William Zeronza, Walter Los, Stanley Kot, Walter Sas, Stanley Borys, Joseph Ciesla, Frank Kalwa. Bottom row: Thomas Ogram, Zigmunt Legienza, Stanley Dojka, Ted Mendrala, Ted Dynia, Stanley Swiatwoski, Edward Kozaczka, Stanley Dynia, Joseph Golas, Walter Nowak, Peter Dubiel. (Provided by Matthew Salva)

them a share in the American Dream. It also showed that they had come of age and were becoming a more visible presence in the town. A short time later, some Poles would venture into politics and the professions.

A source of great pride was the St. Adalbert's Cadets, later the Drum and Bugle Corps, which was organized in the early 1930's by assistant pastor Rev. John J. Sobolewski. It took part in parades and competitions throughout the area. The expertise these musicians had achieved was demonstrated on September 1, 1937 when they won the national championship at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention in Buffalo, New York. A newspaper article announcing the victory said that the corps "...was long recognized and earned its laurels as one of the leading junior corps in the East, and since its advancement into the senior division has rapidly risen to the fore as one of the outstanding musical organizations of its kind in the country."⁴⁸ Unfortunately, despite its early successes, the St. Adalbert's Drum and Bugle Corps disbanded in the 1950's.

A painful episode in the history of St. Adalbert's occurred in 1934 when some members of the Polish community chose to separate themselves, not only from the parish, but from Roman Catholicism itself. They aligned themselves with the Polish National Catholic Church, a movement which

originated in Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1897. This church resulted from discontent some Poles had in their dealings with American bishops who were mostly of Irish or German descent. The church is schismatic in that it does not recognize the authority of the pope. Polish National Catholic parishes began appearing in many Polish enclaves throughout America.

It is not immediately clear why such a division took place within Enfield's Polish community. Some may have been dissatisfied with the leadership of Fr. Federkiewicz. Others may have found the regulations of the Polish National Catholic Church appealing, especially those concerning marriage and divorce. A likely possibility is the fact that church members exercised more control over financial matters.

The establishment of Holy Cross Polish National Catholic Church resulted in the most serious division ever to take place within Enfield's Polish community. How painful it must have been for Poles, once united by faith and a common purpose, to worship apart. Animosity ran high on both sides at first. In time, emotions cooled as the two Polish parishes grew separately.

Although separate in worship, St. Adalbert's and Holy Cross located their cemeteries on adjoining parcels of land. The St. Adalbert's Roman Catholic Cemetery Association was created through the efforts of the Krakusy Society and the St. Adalbert Society of Brotherly Help.⁴⁹ Incorporated on February 15, 1936, the association's first board of directors consisted of Jan Misiaszek, president; Wojciech



Some of the priests who served as assistant pastors in the early years: top left, Rev. Peter Sroka, top right, Rev. Julius S. Pac, bottom left, Rev. John J. Sobolewski, bottom right, Rev. Hyacinth Lepak. (Reproduced by William Tanski)

Rzeszos, vice president; Stanislaw Bania, treasurer; Franciszek Samborski, assistant treasurer; Jozef Prajzner, secretary; Wawrzyniec Kiszka, financial secretary; and remaining directors: Ludwik Dusza, Pawel Roczniak, Antoni Gucwa, Piotr Tenerowicz and Pawel Mazniecki. Land off Belmont Avenue, part of the Henry Brainard farm, was purchased and the deed granted on March 30, 1936. Persons wishing to purchase lots did so through a caretaker appointed by the board. As in life, so even in death, the parishioners of St. Adalbert's wanted a place of their own. Before the cemetery was established, burials were done in the old St. Patrick's cemetery off Pleasant Street or, later, in the new St. Patrick's cemetery on King Street.

The Annual Report for 1937 shows that a new organ was purchased for \$1,310. The year before, on April 18, the "St. Adalbert's Church Committee" sponsored an Organ Fund Dance at the Polish Home. A newspaper described the new instrument as "a large organ of the most modern type."⁵⁰

Fr. Federkiewicz had a great love for riding horses and he frequently conducted local parish business on horseback. He also kept a small pond behind the church where he raised goldfish. Federkiewicz often spent his summer vacations in Poland visiting relatives and friends. He enjoyed walking; many times he went to Suffield where he favored roads that overlooked Thompsonville and the church building so dear to his heart.

The silver jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood in 1937 gave the parishioners of St.

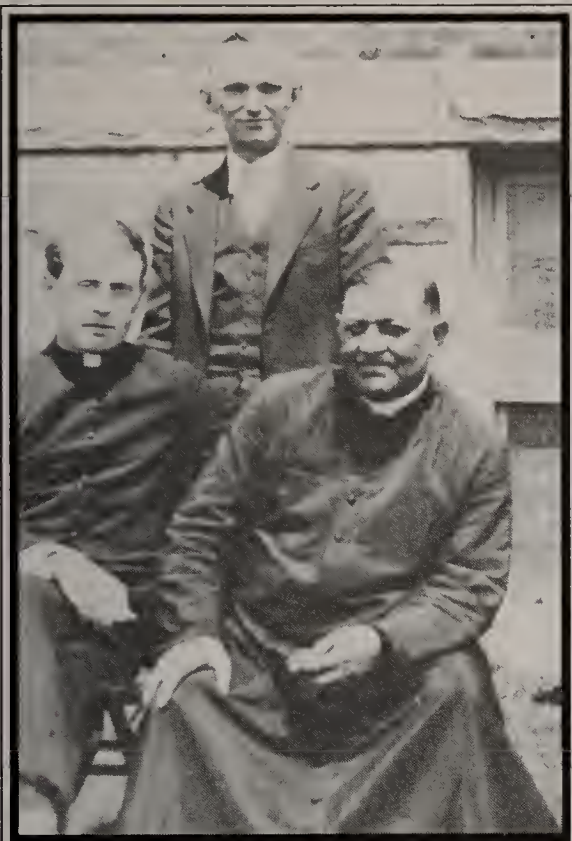
Adalbert's an opportunity to express their affection for Fr. Federkiewicz. He had spent more than twenty-two of his twenty-five years in the priesthood as their first pastor. Together both pastor and parishioners shared in many trials and successes. A great celebration was planned for Sunday, June 20, 1937 under the supervision of Rev. Joseph P. Dawid, assistant pastor at the time. A newspaper article noted that: "It will be the first time in this town that the observance of a silver jubi-



The first and long-time housekeeper at the rectory, Katarzyna Basista. (Provided by Sophie Krzys)



The St. Cecilia Choir in 1934. Left to right, top row: Nellie Zymanek, Veronica Nowak, unknown, Stella Nowak. Middle row: unknown, John Podosek, Madeline Krupczak, Stella Podosek, Helen Michalowski, Helen Podosek, unknown, Catherine Petraska, Katherine Basista. Bottom row: Edward Pepek, Fr. Dawid, Fr. Federkiewicz, Matthew Sypek. (Provided by Veronica Rybczyk)



At the top is organist Walter Golba, bottom left, assistant pastor Rev. Joseph P. Dawid, bottom right, Fr. Federkiewicz, shown in 1934. (Provided by Veronica Rybczyk)

lee of any pastor has been held.”⁵¹ A parade of all Polish societies in Enfield, including the Drum and Bugle Corps and a contingent of parishioners, marched that morning from the Polish Home to the rectory. A procession then formed and entered the church. Among the priests who assisted Fr. Federkiewicz in celebrating the jubilee Mass were Rev. Maximillian Soltysek, chaplain of the Felician Motherhouse in Enfield; Rev. Robert J. Christopher, assistant pastor of St. Patrick’s, and the legendary Rev. (later Monsignor) Lucyan Bojnowski, the “immigrant pastor” of Sacred Heart Church in New Britain. The homily was given by Rev. Stanislaus Wlodarczyk, C.M., assistant pastor of St. Stanislaus Church in New Haven. The St. Cecilia’s Choir performed under the direction of the young organist Walter Golba. Following the Mass, Fr. Federkiewicz was chauffeured to the Polish Home in the automobile that was presented to him as a gift from the parish. Mary Muzyka chaired the afternoon banquet attended by nearly five- hundred people. Following dinner, remarks were made by Enfield’s first selectman, the superintendent of Bigelow-Sanford, and the presidents of the various societies. There were musical selections by the choir and other musicians and singers, a dance by

girls from the parish entitled “Heavenly Call of the Angels,” and a drill by boys from the parish. The children, incidentally, were supervised by the Felician Sisters.

Unknown at the time, of course, was the sad fact that this celebration of Fr. Federkiewicz’s accomplishments both as a priest and pastor also turned out to be a farewell. The years had taken a toll



A rare view of the church interior as it appeared before the 1940 decoration. It depicts the Jubilee Mass that was celebrated to commemorate Fr. Federkiewicz’s 25th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood on June 20, 1937. (Provided by Mary Muzyka)

on Federkiewicz’s emotional and physical health. Older parishioners recall his decline with tender sadness. On April 1, 1938 he resigned his post at St. Adalbert’s after more than twenty-three years; he was given a leave of absence for reasons of health. Appointed as administrator of the parish effective April 5, 1938 was the Rev. Paul J. Bartlewski. How painful it must have been for Fr. Federkiewicz to leave the parish that was his life, the parish he had

known and nurtured from its infancy. He spent much of the remainder of that year in Poland. When he returned, Federkiewicz took up residence at St. Joseph's Church in Suffield, as guest of the pastor Rev. Anthony Wojcieszuk. He assisted there while waiting for an assignment to another parish.

On the morning of Wednesday, December 28, 1938, the parishioners of St. Adalbert's woke up to the shocking news that their former pastor had been killed accidentally the evening before (December 27) at the age of 52. The *Hartford Courant* reported on its front page that Fr. Federkiewicz died instantly after he was struck by an automobile while he was walking along the side of East Street (Rt. 159) in Suffield, 500 feet south of the Massachusetts border.⁵² The accident occurred at 5:45 PM; the driver of the vehicle traveling north said he had been blinded by the lights of oncoming traffic and had not seen Federkiewicz who was also heading north. Rev. Michael J. Lynch of Windsor Locks, passing by a short time later, administered the last rites.⁵³ Federkiewicz had tried to get a ride to Springfield earlier but had been unsuccessful, so he had decided to walk as was his custom.

The funeral was held on the morning of December 29 at St. Joseph's Church in Suffield. The pastor, Rev. Wojcieszuk, celebrated the Requiem Mass. He was assisted by Rev. Stephen Bartkowski, pastor of Holy Cross Church in New Britain, Rev. John Balasa of SS. Cyril and Methodius Church in Hartford, Rev. John J. Sobolewski of St. Joseph's Church, Rockville, and Rev. Paul J. Bartlewski, Federkiewicz's successor at St. Adalbert's. The homily was given by long-time friend Rev. George Bartlewski, pastor of St. Stanislaus Church in Bristol. The Most Rev. Maurice F. McAuliffe, Bishop of Hartford, presided and gave absolution.

Following the funeral, the body of Fr. Federkiewicz was taken to St. Adalbert's. There he lay in state until the following morning, in the church and among the people he loved. A service was held and Federkiewicz was buried at the highest point of St. Adalbert's cemetery. A large stone cross marks the site.



Clergy processing to the church for the Jubilee Mass. At the end on the left is Msgr. Lucyan Bojnowski, the legendary "immigrant pastor" of New Britain. (Provided by Mary Muzyka)



Some of the "angels" who performed during the Jubilee program at the Polish Home. Kneeling: Jane Pierz. Left to right, middle row: Sophie Podosek, Wanda Zawada, Sophie Pierz, Stella Polec. Top row: Helen Brzowski, Malvina Polec, Matilda Polec. (Provided by Sophie Krzys)

So ended the life and career of Rev. Stanislaus Federkiewicz. St. Adalbert's parish, which had consumed so much of his priestly life, was also to be his legacy.



*The memorial card issued at the death of
Fr. Federkiewicz. (Provided by Alec Piorek)*

CHAPTER THREE

THE BARTLEWSKI YEARS 1938 - 1972

The Reverend Paul J. Bartlewski, better known as “Father Paul,” often mentioned how, when he first arrived at St. Adalbert’s, he found himself the pastor of a parish deeply in debt and tightly gripped by the Depression. The failing health of Fr. Federkiewicz left St. Adalbert’s in need of strong leadership. Father Paul had already distinguished himself as a dynamic assistant pastor in several parishes. He and St. Adalbert’s were well matched. So began a relationship between pastor and parish that was to last thirty-four years.

Father Paul was born in New Britain, Connecticut on March 21, 1897. His parents, Kajetan Bartlewski and Justyna (Nastyn) Bartlewski, worked a farm in Przanysz, Poland before coming to America, probably in 1892. Like so many other Poles, Kajetan Bartlewski was attracted to the employment opportunities in New Britain and found work in the factories as a carpenter. Paul Bartlewski grew up on Tremont Street with his brothers: George, Peter, and Frank, and his sisters Helen and Mary. After attending the school of his home parish, Sacred Heart in New Britain, Paul completed high school and first year college studies at St. John Kanty’s, a preparatory school in Erie, Pennsylvania. In 1918, as the first World War was coming to a close, Paul spent one year at an Army Officer Training School. Following the war, he returned to New Britain and briefly taught at Sacred Heart School.

Under the leadership of Fr. (later Monsignor) Lucyan Bojnowski, Paul’s home parish was gaining a reputation for producing vocations to the priesthood, often one or more a year. His older brother George, mentioned earlier as a friend of Fr. Federkiewicz, studied for the priesthood at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland and was ordained in 1915. As Msgr. Bartlewski later said in an interview, when the bishop of Hartford asked Paul “Do you want to go where your brother went?” he answered “yes,” and was sent to Fribourg in September, 1919 to study philosophy and theology for five years.

The University of Fribourg was a popular destination for many American seminarians of Polish background. It had a chair of Polish literature and attracted many priests from Poland who were pursuing doctorates. Fribourg was a regular university with departments in science, law, and medicine, as well as theology. Most subjects were taught in Latin. During his time at the University, Paul lived in quarters named the “Salesianum.”⁵⁴ As a rule, American seminarians did not return to their homeland until their years of study were completed. Instead, vacations provided students with the opportunity to travel throughout Europe; Paul took advantage of this. It has been said that he also spent his free time teaching Polish seasonal immigrants who worked on large Swiss farms.⁵⁵

On July 5, 1924, Paul Bartlewski was ordained to the priesthood at Fribourg. Shortly afterwards, he returned to New Britain and celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at Sacred Heart Church. Father Paul was the fourth priest to be ordained from that parish that year. He was first assigned to be an assistant pastor at St. Joseph's Church in Willimantic. It was not a Polish parish, but Father Paul spent some of his time ministering to the sizable number of Poles who worshiped there. In 1928 he was transferred to Holy Name Church in Stamford. It was while he served as an assistant at St. Stanislaus Church in Meriden, however, that Father Paul demonstrated an activist style which later characterized his ministry at St. Adalbert's. He arrived in Meriden on October 25, 1930 and worked with the long-time pastor of St. Stanislaus, Monsignor John L. Ceppa. Father Paul eventually extended his activities beyond the parish to civic endeavors. He helped mobilize efforts that resulted in the erection of a monument to Casimir Pulaski, the Polish general who led American forces during the Revolutionary War. The monument was dedicated on October 7, 1934 and stands on the Broad Street median at Olive Street in Meriden. The following year, Father Paul helped organize a festive welcome for Marshall Pilsudski when the leader of Poland visited Meriden during an American tour. Soil from Meriden, where Poles first settled in Connecticut, was placed in an urn and sent to Krakow, Poland.⁵⁶

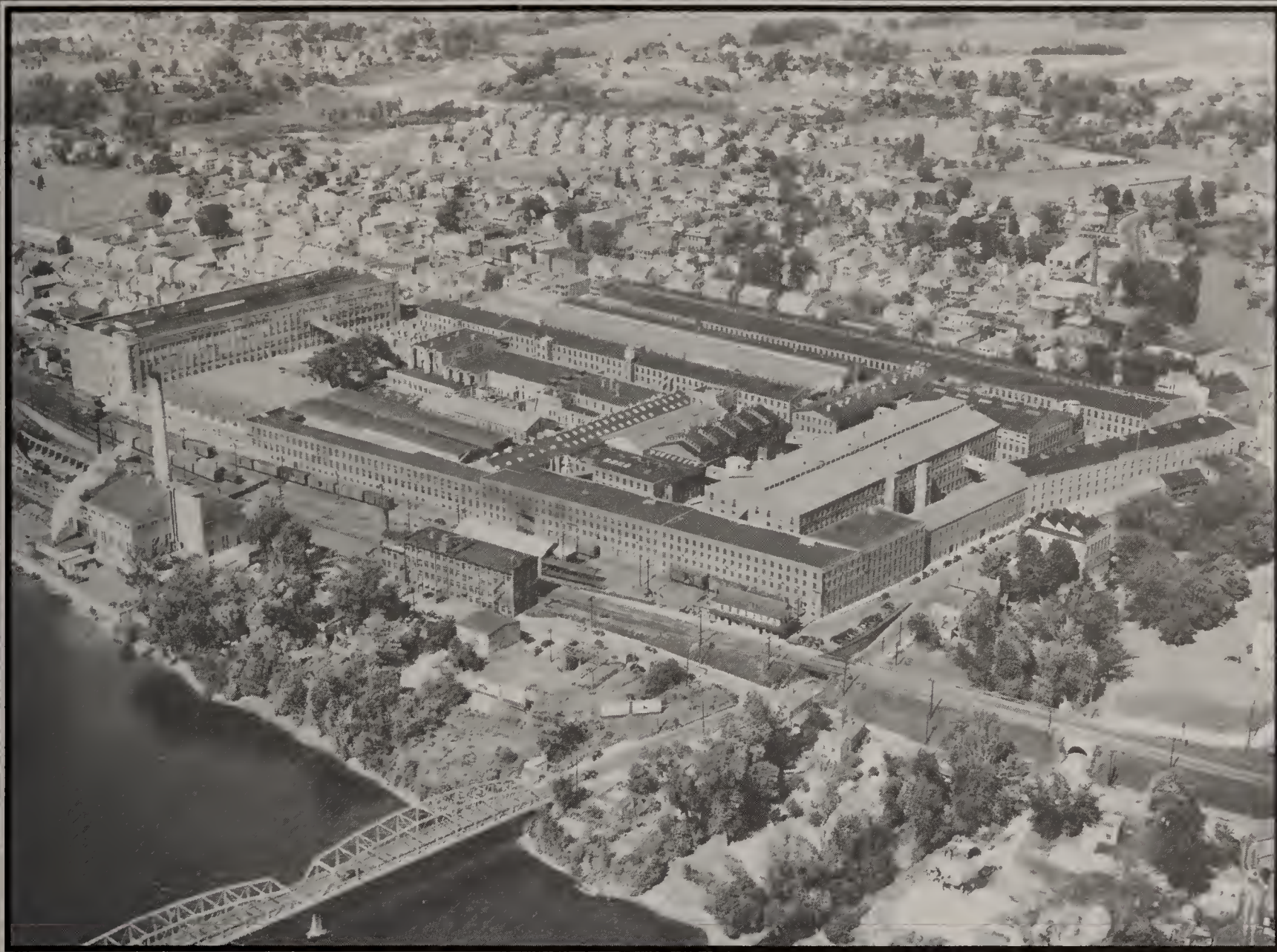


Rev. Paul J. Bartlewski (Early portrait)

A sports enthusiast himself, Father Paul organized parish athletic teams. His crowning achievement at St. Stanislaus' was the role he played in the construction of a large Community Center for the parish on Akron Street, which was completed on April 15, 1937. The first floor contained meeting rooms and a large hall on the second floor provided space for social and athletic events. Father Paul offered to go door to door to collect money for the project. A plaque crediting his efforts was later placed on the building near the main entrance.

Father Paul's organizational skills probably caught the attention of Hartford's bishop, the Most Rev. Maurice F. McAuliffe, as he searched for someone to assume duties at St. Adalbert's in light of Fr. Federkiewicz's pending resignation. It was at St. Stanislaus Rectory that Father Paul received word of his appointment as administrator of St. Adalbert's in Thompsonville- a town, it is said, he knew only by name.

It wasn't long after his arrival that Father Paul learned an important fact of life at St. Adalbert's: that its financial state was closely related to the rising and falling fortunes of Bigelow employees. Most parishioners depended on the carpet mill for their livelihood. What affected their employment also affected the collection basket. Considering St. Adalbert's financial problems, the strike that broke at the Bigelow-Sanford plant on May 11, 1938, little more than a month after his arrival, proved most



Aerial view of the Bigelow-Sanford Carpet Company, c.1940. (From the Enfield Historical Society Collection)

untimely. Falling carpet sales resulted in employee layoffs and a 10% wage cut. Workers, meanwhile, had recently unionized and a stand-off developed. An arbitration period was agreed upon and employees returned to work pending a final decision.⁵⁷ As an interested party, and never one not to get involved, Father Paul went to New York to participate in the negotiations.⁵⁸ On October 4 the arbitrator recommended that half the wage cut be restored. Labor and management accepted the proposal and one of the most severe labor disputes at the carpet mill was settled.⁵⁹ From that time on, Father Paul maintained a strong interest in developments at the Bigelow-Sanford.

To keep St. Adalbert's financially afloat, Fr. Federkiewicz cut back on spending for maintenance of parish facilities as much as possible. After he arrived, Father Paul determined that this could no longer continue. He proceeded to upgrade the condition of buildings despite the burden this would add to the already financially strapped parish. The 1938 Annual Report lists extensive repairs on the church building including repairing and repointing the brickwork, sealing the windows and doors, installing new copper gutters and the purchasing of a new boiler. The following year two stone grottoes, encasing the statues of Mary and St. Adalbert, were constructed outside on either side of the church. A two-car garage with a clubroom was built behind the rectory. The mortgage was increased to \$98,000 in 1940.

At the same time, Father Paul explored every fund-raising opportunity at his disposal. He began a tradition of holding a banquet every year in November, and would go door to door selling tickets as he had done in Meriden. Pleas were frequently made from the pulpit for increased giving. Perhaps realizing that the Polish community in Enfield might not be large enough to provide the needed revenue,

Father Paul maintained an open door policy concerning parish membership. This particularly attracted those of Italian background who may have developed a disaffection for St. Patrick's. Annual Reports in the years that followed indicated a significant increase in ordinary and extra-ordinary income, doubling at first in 1938 and rising steadily thereafter.

In 1940 a special collection was taken to help pay for a long delayed project: the decoration of the church interior. The cost of building the upper church in 1928, and the Depression that followed discouraged such work for twelve years. Four murals depicting the Annunciation, the Agony in the Garden, the Resurrection and, over the sanctuary, St. Adalbert in Heaven, were applied to the vaulted ceiling. Openings in the back wall were filled in with portraits of the four gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Two choirs of angels, and depictions of St. Michael the Archangel and a

Guardian Angel looked down from the area above the main altar. Portraits of saints were placed in the medallions over each column and, over the choir loft, St. Cecilia was depicted. Decorative patterns filled in other spaces. The church interior was also dramatically enhanced by a large chandelier donated by the parish Rosary Society. The society, incidentally, was organized by Father Paul in 1938 and entrusted with the care of altar linens and vestments.

On October 20, 1940 St. Adalbert's celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding and rededication of the newly decorated church interior. Rev. Paul Piechocki, who had encouraged the creation of a parish for Enfield's Poles long ago, was invited to celebrate the Jubilee Mass. The Most Rev. Henry J. O'Brien, auxiliary bishop at the time, presided. He was escorted from the rectory to the church by children from the parish dressed as Biblical characters. A reception followed at the Polish Home



An early post card of the church and rectory. (Provided by Regina Chelkonas)



The church interior after the 1940 redecoration.

where special attention was given to three parishioners who had helped in the founding of St. Adalbert's: Maria Dudka, Jan Gwozdz and Jozef Prajzner. Entertainment, provided by parish children, included a tableau depicting the life of St. Adalbert.⁶⁰

Though preoccupied with its own concerns, St. Adalbert's did not lose sight of what was happening on the world stage, especially in Poland. In 1938 the Thompsonville post of the United Veterans of the Polish Army, naming itself after Marshall Pilsudski, commemorated the twentieth anniversary of Polish independence and the establishment of the Polish Army, as well as the eighteenth anniversary of the battle between Polish troops and the Bolsheviks at Warsaw. News of the German invasion of Poland resulting in the loss of Polish independence and the start of a second World War, was received with great sadness.

With America's entrance into the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, four hundred and forty-eight men and women from St. Adalbert's served in the armed forces,⁶¹ a remarkable number considering the size of the parish. The Annual Report of 1942 put the total population of St. Adalbert's at 1,810. As the days stretched into months and the months turned into years, news from the battlelines reached the quiet streets of Thompsonville. The sad fate of Poland during the war burdened the hearts of many parishioners. Communication with relatives in the old country was usually cut off; many family members were never heard from again. Appeals were made in the parish to assist Polish relief efforts.

During the war, in 1943, Father Paul was appointed to serve on the reemployment committee of the local draft board.⁶² It was the work of the committee to help newly discharged servicemen reenter civilian life. Father Paul also sat on the Enfield Reemployment and Veteran's Advisory Committee. He served several terms as chaplain of the Horace J. Tanguay post of the American Legion and, on September 16, 1945, was elected State Chaplain of the Legion.⁶³ The following year Father Paul was a recipient of the Selective Service Medal.⁶⁴ After the war Father Paul helped organize the John Maciolek Post of the American Legion, named after one of the parishioner-soldiers killed in action. The Maciolek Post established a tradition at St. Adalbert's that continues to be observed on the second Sunday of each February: the honoring of four chaplains who gave up their life-jackets so that soldiers and sailors could survive the sinking of the USS *Dorchester*, a troop ship that was torpedoed in 1943.



*Scenes of a field Mass celebrated on land now occupied by the school.
(Provided by Annette Lugas)*



By war's end, St. Adalbert's parish had mourned the loss of nine of its sons: Anthony Czerpak, Walter Typrowicz, Stanley Skorski, Louis Piorkowski, John Maciolek, Stanley Dziura, Ray King, John Szymczyk, and Karol S. Dubiel.

While the Second World War took its toll, parishioners who worked at the Bigelow mill had to adjust to changes in production made necessary by the conflict. Carpet looms were converted to produce army blankets, cotton duck (a heavy fabric), tents, and camouflage netting.⁶⁵ Jobs at the plant were plentiful and wages increased. Annual Reports issued by St. Adalbert's during the war years showed that, while ordinary income remained steady at about \$10,000, there was a dramatic increase in extra-ordinary revenue: from \$15,477 in 1942 to \$38,406 in 1945. Heavy fund-raising activity managed to tap into Enfield's share of war-time prosperity. Gradually the burden of St. Adalbert's mortgage was lightened by bingo games, picnics, dances, and banquets. At last, on November 18, 1945, Father Paul declared the parish to be debt-free. He burned the mortgage during a celebration that coincided with St. Adalbert's thirtieth anniversary.⁶⁶

Released from the burden of debt after eighteen years, St. Adalbert's was able to share in the post-war spirit of optimism that swept across America. Dreams, long delayed by the Depression and the Second World War, were revived. Newly discharged servicemen expressed their faith in the future by starting families and building homes. The baby and housing "booms" that resulted, dramatically changed the face of the nation. Enfield found itself becoming a "bedroom town" for Hartford and Springfield. New and inexpensive housing attracted city workers who found suburban life appealing. Between 1940 and 1970 Enfield's population was to increase three-fold.

During those promising post-war years, Father Paul accelerated the maintenance of parish facilities, beginning with a reconstruction of the church's front steps in 1945. The brick parapets that lined the stairs were completely rebuilt.



Father Paul in his chaplain's uniform. He is with Rev. Peter Jaworski, M. S. (Provided by Sophie Krzys)



The Jubilee Mass celebrating the 25th anniversary of Father Paul's ordination to the priesthood on June 5, 1949. Standing at the foot of the altar are, from left to right: Msgr. George G. Bartlewski, Father Paul, Rev. James Keller of South Dakota, and Rev. Peter Jaworski, M.S. of Manitoba, Canada. (Provided by Stanley Dynia)



A meeting of the Rosary Society in the hall of the church basement. In the front row are Father Paul and Rev. Henry P. Fiedorczyk, assistant pastor. (Provided by Annette Lugas)

Thirty-one years later the front steps were to undergo yet another reconstruction. A lot across from the church was surfaced for parking in 1947. Numerous furnishings were purchased for the sanctuary the following year. Much attention was given to improving the appearance of the parish cemetery. Extensive landscaping was done in 1948. The entrance to the cemetery, where only a simple wooden cross had stood, was enhanced by the erection of a Memorial Crucifixion Group in 1951. Marble figures of the Blessed Mother, Mary Magdalene, St. John, and the crucified Jesus were imported from Italy at a cost of \$5,000. While soliciting contributions for the project Father Paul wrote that the cemetery

...should be to us a sacred place, rich in beauty, and a lasting memorial of devotion and love to our departed loved ones. Our hearts should be here in this Silent Parish of our Dead. We loved them in life; we mourn and cherish them in death. As a testimony of our devotion and love toward our departed dead, we spared no effort or cost to make St. Adalbert's Cemetery a final resting place, enshrined in beauty, peace and dignity.⁶⁷

While these physical improvements were taking place, the social needs of the parish were not being neglected. Mention was made for the first time of a Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) in the 1947 Annual Report. It began with fifty-five members. The Holy Name Society was first mentioned in a 1957 report with a membership of eighty-two men.

As the post-war years continued, St. Adalbert's managed to remain free of debt. Father Paul soon



The 1951 First Communion Class. (Provided by Sophie Krzys)

determined that the parish was in a position to consider the most ambitious project since its founding: the establishment and construction of a grammar school staffed by Sisters housed in a parish convent. Not everyone at St. Adalbert's agreed with this assessment. Although support for Catholic education was strong, some parishioners had misgivings about the ability of St. Adalbert's to maintain a school of its own. No one looked forward to the prospect of plunging the parish into a new state of indebtedness. As the popularity of parochial schools grew in the United States, however, Father Paul's wishes prevailed.

The establishment of parochial schools in America was strongly encouraged by the nation's bishops when they met at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884. The schools were intended to counteract what was perceived at the time to be a strong Protestant influence in the public school system. For many parishes, however, it was not possible to comply with the wishes of the Council until after the Second World War. The establishment of parochial schools in America gained momentum when young Catholic families grew and Catholics in general became more prosperous. Hartford's Bishop (in 1953, Archbishop) Henry J. O'Brien was known to be a strong promoter of Catholic schools.

The education of children had received special attention at St. Adalbert's since its founding. Mention has already been made of the Polish language classes that had usually been staffed by parish volunteers in the 1920's and early 1930's. The first Annual Report filed by St. Adalbert's in 1915 indicated that seventy-two children were enrolled in a religious education or "catechism" program. Later reports noted that these classes were conducted "in the church" by the "pastor teacher" (Fr.

Federkiewicz) or a “curate teacher.” The early Annual Reports filed by Father Paul mentioned that the parish had hired from four to six “female teachers.” Four classrooms were installed in the basement of the church in 1938. Three more were added by 1953.

The Felician Sisters began to teach religion and Polish language classes at St. Adalbert’s in 1935. Officially known as the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice, Third Order of St. Francis (C.S.S.F.), the Felician Sisters were founded in Poland by Mother Angela Truszkowska in 1857. They were invited to extend their work to America in 1874 and the order grew rapidly. Administration of the order made it necessary to establish numerous provinces. In 1932, it was decided to create a province in New England. The Felicians were attracted to Enfield as the site of a new provincial house by the availability of “Longview,” a spacious estate in the center of the town’s historic district. A mansion on the property was built in 1832 by Orrin Thompson, founder of Thompsonville’s carpet industry. Although St. Adalbert’s played no role in bringing the Felicians to Enfield, the close proximity of the provincial house proved to be beneficial.

In addition to the religious instruction program at St. Adalbert’s, the Felicians operated a kindergarten in the parish. On December 11, 1950 parents of the school children organized a Parent-Educator Group “...to help the children and the Sisters with any difficulties they may have at the school, to help organize socials, Christmas parties, Communion breakfasts, etc.”⁶⁸ The first officers were Blanche Maleski, president; Sophie Krzys, vice-president; Helen Mokrycki, secretary; and Emily Iwanicki, treasurer.

Father Paul knew that, if he proceeded with his intention of establishing a parochial school, he would first have to provide housing for the Sisters who would staff it. From the time they began their work at St. Adalbert’s, Felicians were commuting from the provincial house two miles away. Efficient operation of the school made it imperative that they live close by. The new school would be able to function for a while using the religious instruction classrooms in the church basement, but construction



The 1955 May Crowning.

of the convent could not wait. Father Paul began setting aside money for the convent project as early as 1950.⁶⁹ On April 8, 1954 he announced in *The Catholic Transcript* that he was ready to break ground on property west of the church. The architectural office of Paul H. Olson of West Hartford, represented by Dominic Cimino, drew plans for a two-story brick structure of Georgian design. The first floor was to contain a chapel, sacristy, office, community room, kitchen and dining room. Accommodations for ten Sisters would be provided on the second floor.⁷⁰ The convent was the first major work of Dominic Cimino, an Enfield native, and helped to advance his career. Three years later Father Paul called on him again to design the parish school. Cimino eventually earned a reputation for being a skilled restoration architect; he was commissioned to direct work on the Harkness Tower and Battell Chapel at Yale, and the Connecticut State Capitol and Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch in Hartford.

The 1954 Annual Report indicated that total cost of the convent project exceeded \$86,000. In January 1955, Father Paul said that the building was “free of

debt.”⁷¹ It is interesting to note that, when Father Paul announced his intention to build a convent, no mention was made of plans for a future school. News reports only indicated that the convent would house six sisters who were providing religious instruction to over 300 parish children twice a week.⁷² The convent was formally blessed by Archbishop Henry J. O’Brien on November 21, 1954. Only a month before, on October 21,⁷³ the parish school officially opened its doors for the first time.

St. Adalbert School had modest beginnings. It grew out of the kindergarten classes the Felician Sisters had been conducting for some time. The children who attended the kindergarten in the 1955-56 school year became the first students of the new parochial school. Instead of moving on to public school for first



The architect's drawing of the convent. (Reproduced from The Catholic Transcript with permission)

grade, as was done in the past, these children were able to enroll in a parish first grade class. The following year they moved on to the second grade and so on. St. Adalbert's School, in other words, grew one grade at a time, a new one being added each year. Lunches were provided in a cafeteria that was improvised in a large hall of the church basement that was lined by the classrooms.

With the addition of a new grade each year, it became apparent that the church basement would not be able to contain the expanding enrollment much longer. St. Adalbert's School had proven to be a successful venture, but its future depended on the construction of a larger and better equipped facility. *The Catholic Transcript* reported on October 18, 1956 that Father Paul had announced his intention to break ground the following spring for a parish grammar school on land east of the rectory. The architectural firm of Olson and Miller of Hartford, again represented by Dominic Cimino, was hired to prepare a design. The proposed plan for the school, however, was very different from the building that was eventually constructed. A preliminary drawing showed a typical "1950's" school design with a flat roof and an arched auditorium that was to double as a cafeteria. "Its structure," *The Catholic Transcript* reported, "will be similar to that employed for the East Windsor High School, designed by the same architectural firm and noted for its low construction cost."⁷⁴ The school was expected to cost \$350,000.

Father Paul's announcement proved premature. Nothing was done on the school site for over a year and a half. Presumably, St. Adalbert's did not have enough money to even begin the project, and it became clear that much fund-raising would have to be done. On October 10, 1957, Father Paul announced new plans for the school. The design had been revised and was a great improvement over the one proposed earlier. The classroom and auditorium wings were to have pitched roofs. Large glass windows would create a light and open atmosphere. The new design was referred to as "ultra-modern."

The ground-breaking ceremony for the new St. Adalbert School was held on Sunday, May 11, 1958. It followed the annual outdoor crowning of the statue of Mary. Members of the Sodality of the



*The 1957 Eighth Grade Graduation Class from the parish religious education program.
With Father Paul is Rev. Edward S. Jaksina, assistant pastor. (Provided by Sophie Krzys)*

Children of Mary and school children processed to the site of the new school. Rev. Francis Rzasa of St. Joseph Church in Suffield preached, and musical selections were provided by the St. Cecilia Choir. As he turned the first spadeful of earth, Father Paul set into motion a project that was to dominate his many remaining years as pastor of St. Adalbert's.

Construction bids were opened nine days later. On June 12, 1958 the *Thompsonville Press* reported that the general contract was awarded to the Wadhams and May Company, the low bidder, at \$494,180. Construction was due to begin immediately. A press release provided the following description of the school's final design:

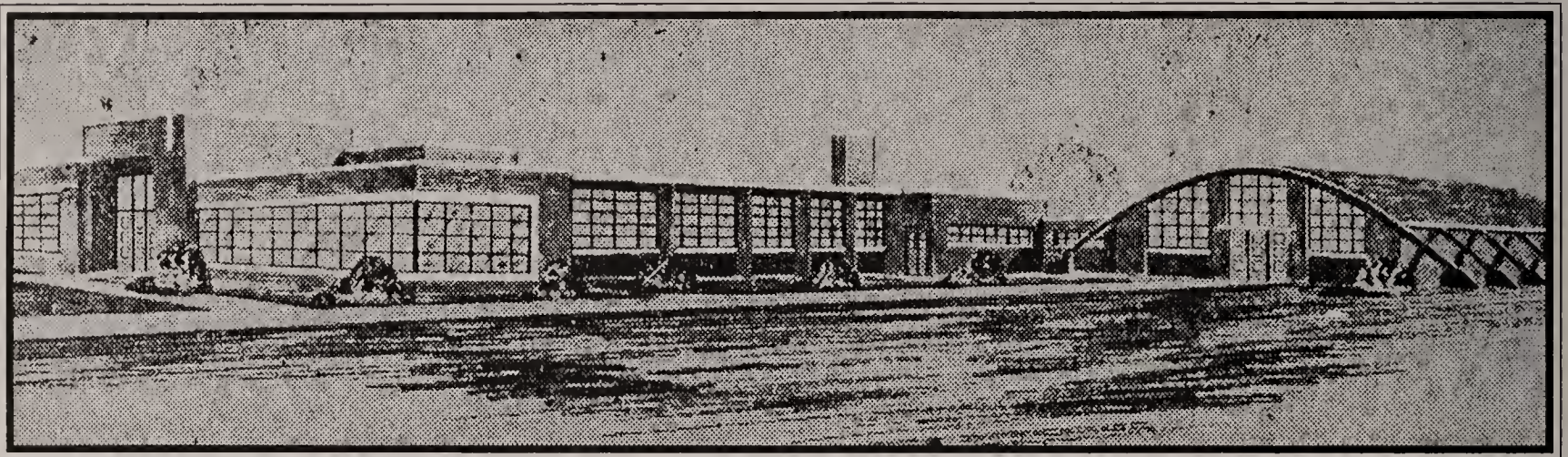
The new school will be a modern and complete school plant and will be comprised of nine classrooms, health room, offices, cafeteria, kitchen and a multi-purpose unit complete with stage, cloak rooms, shower rooms, etc. Each classroom will be equipped with wardrobes, storage areas, sinks, project display areas, and individually controlled heating units. The cafeteria has been designed to accomodate 200 children at each serving and is joined by an ultra modern kitchen unit. An attractive lobby area has been designed with a large dedication panel as its focal point. The facilities for the new school have been planned for maximum use by the church community and have been designed for use by either single or multiple groups of persons. At the approach to the main entrance will be found three large steel crosses

symbolizing the crucifixion group, thereby calling immediate attention to the religious aspects of the building.⁷⁵

In an editorial, the *Thompsonville Press* praised Father Paul's persistence and noted that:

Indirectly Father Paul is doing the town of Enfield and all its residents- whatever their church affiliation be- a great service. With the addition of St. Adalbert's Church School, tension will be relieved on the public school system which has been experiencing growing pains for the past several years. It might even take the place of a new public school and what pressure that will take off the taxpayer.⁷⁶

As construction proceeded in the summer of 1958, the St. Adalbert's School Building Fund Campaign was launched. The minimum goal was set at \$100,000, twenty percent of the projected cost of the school. General chairman of the campaign was Joseph J. Homicki, a trustee of the parish. Associate chairmen were Dr. Walter J. Stopa, also a trustee; Anthony Molinski; and Dr. Thaddeus Valenski. Father Paul and Rev. Edward J. Jaksina, assistant pastor at St. Adalbert's, served as moderators. Wallace Faber, Sr. was named honorary chairman.



*The original design for St. Adalbert's School as proposed in 1956. It was revised significantly.
(Reproduced from The Catholic Transcript with permission)*

A letter that was sent to every parishioner admitted that the need for contributions was urgent. Father Paul spoke of the "gravity of the problem which prompted us to inaugurate this Campaign."⁷⁷ Men from the parish, the letter added, would be selected to act as Father Paul's "personal representatives" and would visit every family in the parish to discuss the campaign. The fund-raising program allowed for payments to be made over a three-year period, and numerous memorial opportunities were offered. The intensive campaign, which concluded on August 1, 1958, far exceeded the minimum goal by raising \$229,010.⁷⁸

The large vacant lot east of the rectory was soon marked by a large succession of thick wooden beams that gave definition to the classroom and auditorium wings. Each week parishioners going to Sunday Mass saw the building take form as construction progressed. The pace of activity raised hopes that the school would be ready for the 1959-60 school year. Finally, on Sunday, August 16, 1959, the new St. Adalbert School building was dedicated by the Most Rev. John F. Hackett, Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford. Ceremonies were held in the new auditorium with a capacity crowd of over one-thousand people. Rev. John J. Sobolewski of Beacon Falls, a former assistant at St. Adalbert's, was the principal speaker. Following the dedication, an open house was held to give parishioners a look at the the school for the first time.

The classrooms were “state of the art.” All were linked to the principal’s office by an intercom system. Each classroom had its own sink and a spacious coat room. The school also had its own cafeteria and a well- equipped kitchen. The auditorium, which doubled as a gymnasium, replaced the Polish National Home as the largest hall in Enfield. Imported statues were placed in each classroom and in other parts of the school. The lobby was enhanced by a life-size statue of Saint Adalbert. All furnishings in the school, including a piano in the auditorium, were new.

Following the dedication, the classrooms in the church basement, which had served the parish for twenty-one years, were dismantled. The first day of classes in the new school was held on September 9, 1959. Since the building contained nine classrooms, and the school had only expanded to the fourth-grade at that point, some of the remaining classroom space was rented to the Town of Enfield to help relieve congestion in the public schools. At the time, the town was being overwhelmed by “baby-boom” children who were reaching school age.

To say that Father Paul was proud of the new school building would be an understatement. He made frequent visits to classrooms, often to the surprise of the teachers. Occasionally Father Paul would interrupt the daily routine by going class to class to distribute boxes of “Cracker Jack,” or religious medals. At the end of a marking period, he would personally hand out each report card. Regardless of the grades, his comments were usually encouraging. A high point of the early years at St. Adalbert School was the



St. Adalbert's School after completion in 1959. (Photographed by Edward J. Malley and used with permission)

annual celebration of what was called “Father Paul’s Feast Day.” The school children would rehearse songs, dances and marches for weeks. On a Sunday afternoon, late in the school year, each grade would perform before Father Paul and an auditorium filled with proud parents.

Fund-raising to help pay for the new school was a parish preoccupation before and after the building was constructed. Despite the success of the 1958 Campaign and an on-going School Building Fund, Father Paul found it necessary to borrow \$300,000 in 1959.⁷⁹ Annual Reports in the years that followed showed St. Adalbert’s struggling to meet interest payments while, trying to chip away the debt principal. Several parish organizations concentrated their efforts on raising money “for the benefit of the school.” Numerous suppers, concerts, dances, and raffles were held. In 1963 parishioners united to organize the first of many annual summer bazaars on the church grounds. Annual Reports after 1965, however, showed that the interest payments began to exceed payments made on the principal. To manage the worsening situation, on September 3, 1968, Father Paul borrowed \$100,000 from St. Gertrude’s parish in Windsor.⁸⁰ Occasionally wealthy parishes in the Archdiocese made such loans to parishes in need. The arrangement allowed St. Adalbert’s to settle most of its debt with the bank. Payments to St. Gertrude’s were to be made at a low rate of interest.

Its financial difficulties notwithstanding, St. Adalbert School maintained a high level of education and continued to grow. The practice of adding a new grade each year ended when the first eighth grade class was graduated in 1964. This class included many of the students who had entered the school as kindergarteners in the 1955-56 school year. Enrollment peaked in 1965 with 475 pupils.⁸¹ In its earliest years, St. Adalbert School was completely staffed by Felician Sisters. The introduction of lay teachers in the mid-1960's was a sign of things to come.

In 1963, twenty-five years had passed since Father Paul became pastor of St. Adalbert's, and the parish marked the occasion with a Jubilee Mass and banquet on April 28. Among the invited guests were Connecticut's Senators Thomas J. Dodd and Abraham Ribicoff. In a banquet address, Sen. Ribicoff remarked that when he had served as Connecticut's governor, Father Paul had frequently contacted him on behalf of parishioners. "He had everything but a direct line to my office," Ribicoff recalled.⁸² Indeed, since his arrival in 1938, Father Paul had become an institution of sorts in Enfield. His face was well known in many local



Touring the school following its dedication in 1959 are, from left to right: Joseph Homicki, general chairman of the School Building Fund Campaign; The Most Rev. John F. Hackett, Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford; Father Paul; and Dominic Cimino, architect for the Olsen & Miller firm. (Photographed by Edward J. Malley and used with permission)



Felician Sisters inspecting one of the classrooms of the new school. (Photographed by Edward J. Malley and used with permission)

ers. "He had everything but a direct line to my office," Ribicoff recalled.⁸² Indeed, since his arrival in 1938, Father Paul had become an institution of sorts in Enfield. His face was well known in many local

offices, and some people affectionately gave him the title: "Mayor of Enfield." The rectory often received parishioners and non-parishioners alike who sought Father Paul's help. Msgr. Louis B. Blecharczyk, who served as an assistant at St. Adalbert's in 1941-42, once referred to Father Paul as a "one-man Social Service Bureau," and "pastor of the eastern half of the U.S.A."⁸³

Father Paul often spoke on behalf of first-time youthful offenders, believing that "there is never a bad boy." In a 1971 *Hartford Courant* interview, he remarked that "...nobody from our school has ever been sent to reform school.... I've paid some fines and written letters to judges. If a kid is really a good kid and has no record, I try to help and tell him to join the Army or Navy."⁸⁴

Father Paul's many building activities over the years had firmly placed him among the "brick and mortar pastors" of his day. In 1965 he had the church interior repainted and new pews installed, as St. Adalbert's prepared to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its founding. Archbishop Henry J. O'Brien presided at the Golden Jubilee Mass that was held on November 21. A banquet followed in the auditorium, where the main speaker was Congressman Bernard F. Grabowski.

The year 1965 also marked the closing of the Second Vatican Council and implementation of the reforms that it had mandated. St. Adalbert's adjusted well to the changes and, in fact, made a liturgical contribution of its own. The Council had called for active participation by the laity in the celebration of the Mass, and a change in the language of the Mass from Latin to the vernacular or "language of the people." Rev. Paul P. Wysocki, while an assistant at St. Adalbert's, directed the preparation of a booklet called "Pray the Mass." It contained the new dialogue format of the Mass in both English and Polish. Hymns in both languages were included to facilitate congregational singing. The booklet was one of the first of its kind and became popular in many Polish-American communities. Even today St. Adalbert's rectory receives an occasional request for the publication. Children at the school, meanwhile, became aware of how the Council's reforms were affecting the Felician Sisters when they noticed their teachers wearing modified habits.

As Father Paul presided over the growth of St. Adalbert's, the Bigelow-Sanford Carpet Company was entering into a slow but steady decline. As early as 1958 it was apparent to Bigelow officials that the Thompsonville plant could not successfully compete with modern facilities the company had built in the Southern states. The old buildings were unable to contain the machinery that was necessary to make new types of carpet.⁸⁵ The Bigelow-Sanford, which once employed 5,000 people, gradually reduced its work force to 800. In 1971 the Thompsonville plant was closed after one-hundred and forty-three years of operation. There was some concern in Enfield over what this loss of the town's largest taxpayer would mean.⁸⁶ The arrival of many light industry companies, however, helped to soften the impact of Bigelow's closing in the years that followed.

In the not-too-distant past, Bigelow's demise would have meant disaster for St. Adalbert's. As the company cut back its labor force, however, fewer parishioners were employed there. The closing of the plant, consequently, had no significant impact on the parish. Ordinary and extra-ordinary income continued to rise after 1971. St. Adalbert's had managed to outlive the industry that had first brought Poles to Enfield- the industry that, indirectly, had brought the parish into being.

In the years of Bigelow's decline, Father Paul was approaching a milestone of his own. He was reaching the mandatory age of retirement for priests: seventy-five. Always an active man, Father Paul found the idea of leaving his post at St. Adalbert's disagreeable, to say the least. When the time came, however, he reluctantly stepped down on Sunday, June 25, 1972. Few parishioners will forget that day when Father Paul bid farewell from the pulpit to the people he had served as pastor for thirty-four years. Father Paul quietly left the rectory and moved into a large brick house on Enfield Street that had previously been purchased by his late brother, Peter.⁸⁷

Even though Father Paul remained in Enfield, he was rarely seen at St. Adalbert's. Occasionally

friends from the parish would stop at his home to visit. On June 16, 1974, Father Paul returned to the church to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood with a Jubilee Mass. At the banquet that followed, Ella T. Grasso, a congresswoman at the time, delivered an address. She had earlier inserted a tribute to Father Paul in the *Congressional Record*. "To Father Paul," Mrs. Grasso wrote, "the people of St. Adalbert's were not merely charges but were like members of his family. For many years Father has made it his duty to visit each and every family in the parish every year."⁸⁸ Soon after, however, Father Paul's health went into serious decline as cancer took its toll.

When parishioners arrived at the church on Easter Sunday, March 30, 1975, they learned that Father Paul had died early that morning at his Enfield Street home. He was seventy-eight years old. In a statement from her office, Mrs. Grasso, who had become Connecticut's governor by then, said that "...the passing of Father Paul leaves a void in the hearts of all of us who knew him."⁸⁹ Parishioners and friends gathered at the church where the body of Father Paul lay in state. Many of the priests who had served with him as assistants at St. Adalbert's concelebrated Father Paul's funeral Mass on April 3rd. Also attending were the two auxiliary bishops of Hartford: the Most Rev. Joseph F. Donnelly and the Most Rev. John F. Hackett. Bishop Hackett was principal celebrant. Msgr. Alphonse J. Fiedorczyk of Stamford delivered the homily. Father Paul was buried in his family plot at Sacred Heart Cemetery in New Britain.

When he retired, Father Paul had been pastor of St. Adalbert's for more than half of its history. To many parishioners, he had been the only pastor they had known. For more than three decades, the parish and Enfield's Polish community in general had been caught up in Father Paul's strong and down-to-earth personality. He left a mark on St. Adalbert's that will long endure.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RENKIEWICZ YEARS 1972 - PRESENT

When the Reverend Adolphe T. Renkiewicz applied to become the new pastor of Saint Adalbert's in 1972, he was fully aware of the challenges that faced any priest who would succeed Father Paul as pastor. At the time, the fifty-seven-year-old parish had known only two shepherds. It had gotten used to very strong and direct leadership. In his profile,⁹⁰ Father Adolphe acknowledged that his pastoral style would be very different from what St. Adalbert's had known for thirty-four years under Father Paul. He also indicated a willingness to take responsibility for two of the parish's most pressing concerns: the school and the debt it had caused. Archbishop John F. Whealon determined that Father Adolphe was well suited to become the next pastor of St. Adalbert's. The appointment took effect on June 26, 1972.

Adolphe T. Renkiewicz was born in Meriden, Connecticut on October 9, 1930. His father, Adolph T. Renkiewicz, worked at the Miller Company, a lighting manufacturer in Meriden. Adolphe's mother Anna (Duszlak) Renkiewicz worked as a seamstress. Both of his grandfathers were tailors. Adolphe and his brothers, Norman and Edwin, grew up in Meriden. Although the family moved several times, they were never far from St. Stanislaus Church. Adolphe's mother enjoyed telling the story of how, one Sunday morning, she arrived late for Mass with her three young sons. This did not escape the notice of the priest who was preaching at the time, and he strongly reprimanded her from the pulpit. The priest, it turned out, was Father Paul Bartlewski who was then an assistant at St. Stanislaus'.⁹¹

Adolphe attended the parish school from the first to eighth grades. He enjoyed serving as an altar boy and was eager to help during special devotions. While serving, Adolphe was impressed by the kindness of Msgr. John L. Ceppa, long-time pastor of St. Stanislaus. Adolphe was particularly influenced by the dedication of Rev. John J. Sobolewski, the assistant pastor, who took over administrative duties at the parish when Msgr. Ceppa fell ill. Such positive impressions led Adolphe to consider the priesthood for the first time when he was in the fifth grade.

In 1944, at the age of thirteen, Adolphe entered St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield. Six years later he continued his priestly studies at St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester, New York. On May 10, 1956 he was ordained by Archbishop Henry J. O'Brien in Hartford's old St. Joseph's Cathedral. His was the last class to be ordained in the venerable structure before it was gutted by fire at the end of the year. Father Adolphe celebrated his first Mass at his home parish on Mother's Day, May 13. That day he was also asked to close Forty Hours Devotion, an honor usually reserved for the pastor.

Father Adolphe was assigned to work as an assistant pastor at Sacred Heart Church in New Britain with Msgr. Lucyan Bojnowski. In 1959 he served briefly at St. Casimir's in Terryville and, that same year, moved to Immaculate Conception Church in Southington. After seven years, Father Adolphe went to New Britain's Holy Cross Church and worked as an assistant with Msgr. John P. Wodarski. While he was at Holy Cross Father Adolphe learned of his appointment to St. Adalbert's in 1972.

As mentioned earlier, Father Adolphe was very aware of the special challenges St. Adalbert's presented. He assumed his duties as third pastor of the parish with great care. Father Paul, though reluctant to retire, proved to be most gracious and helpful. Both priests were determined that the transition be a smooth one. After retirement, Father Paul wisely distanced himself from the administrative affairs of the parish. It is touching to note that, before he died, Father Paul asked to be anointed by his successor, Father Adolphe.⁹²

Certainly St. Adalbert's benefited from the thirty-four years of Father Paul's pastorate. The direct leadership which Father Paul exercised had served its purpose, but the time had come for more involvement by parishioners in the affairs of St. Adalbert's. Mindful of this, Father Adolphe called for the election of a Parish Council. Twenty-five parishioners were chosen "...to advise the pastor of the parish concerning the spiritual and material needs of the parish and also to assume some of the increasing demands and burdens which cannot be effectively done without the full interest, support, and involvement of the whole parish community."⁹³ At the first meeting on November 12, 1972, the Parish Council elected its officers: Bruno Pysznik, chairman; Walter Golec, vice-chairman; and Sophie Pabis, secretary.

When he arrived at St. Adalbert's, Father Adolphe gave priority to two areas: reduction of the debt, and the continued operation of the school. While concentrating on these issues, nevertheless, the parish had to contend with the cost of unexpected maintenance projects that inevitably surfaced as the parish's facilities got older.

In 1972 the debt stood at \$125,000 (\$25,000 was owed a bank, and the remainder to St. Gertrude's).⁹⁴ As interest payments were made, regular "Debt Reduction Collections" helped to reduce the principal. In 1976, however, a project that had been delayed for two years could no longer wait: the total reconstruction of the front steps of the church. The brick parapets lining the stairs (constructed in 1945) were in danger of collapsing and had to be removed in 1974. The steps, meanwhile, were coming apart and drastic action had to be taken. It was proposed that the front area be redesigned as well as reconstructed. The three existing stairways would be replaced by one stairway that would extend from a large platform. Granite would be used instead of brick. The estimated cost of the project was \$50,000. The plan won approval from the Parish Council and an appeal was mailed to all parishioners on June



Rev. Adolphe T. Renkiewicz

1, 1976. Each family was asked to pledge \$100. The response was generous, and the unforeseen problem was resolved without adding to St. Adalbert's financial burden. That same year, incidentally, the bank debt was settled and the amount owed St. Gertrude's stood at \$75,000.

In the years that followed, regular Debt Reduction Collections continued as other less substantial maintenance expenses competed for parishioner contributions. The exciting years of new construction projects had given way to a time of regular building upkeep: new roofing material was needed for the convent; the gym floor at the school had to be replaced; a new furnace had to be purchased for the church, and so on.

In 1983, parishioners were surprised to hear about, not another unforeseen expense, but an unexpected gift: a major bequest from the estate of Jean Mackey, a former parishioner who had moved to California.⁹⁵ The gift was used to settle the remaining \$28,500 debt to St. Gertrude's. For the first time in many decades, St. Adalbert's was able to enjoy what it had rarely known in the past: freedom from debt. Prudent fiscal management by Father Adolphe helped the parish to reach that point. The remarkable generosity of parishioners has allowed St. Adalbert's to remain debt free, even in times of inflation and rising fuel costs.

Maintenance expenses aside, the costs involved in simply operating the school from one day to another remained a challenge to parishioners. St. Adalbert's School had not been immune to the problems that were plaguing parochial schools across America. When the number of such schools multiplied in the 1950's and 60's, no one could have anticipated a shortage of teaching Sisters. They had been plentiful in the past, and success of the parochial school system depended on the availability of such skilled teachers at low cost. The shortage of Sisters, which began in the 1970's and continues today, made it necessary to fill more and more teaching positions with lay persons. It was understood, of course, that lay teachers would be paid salaries: wages that had to compete with those offered at public schools (including benefits); wages that, by far, exceeded what had been paid the Sisters.

To absorb the cost of salaries and other operating expenses, tuitions were raised at most American parochial schools. This put a strain on some parents who consequently had their children transferred to public schools. Caught in the trap of rising expenses and declining enrollment, many parish schools shut down, especially those in poor neighborhoods.

The closing of parochial schools, unfortunately, continues today; but St. Adalbert's has managed to withstand the pressures. In its early years, the school was entirely staffed by Felician Sisters. Lay teachers were introduced in the mid-1960's. The 1977 Annual Report indicated that the number of lay teachers had surpassed the number of Sisters. At this writing, seven lay teachers and two Felician Sisters teach two-hundred and four students from kindergarten to eighth grade. In addition, the principal and a teacher's aide are Felicians, bringing the total number of Sisters at the school to four.

Much of the credit for helping St. Adalbert's School to weather the crisis in the 1970's goes to Sr. Mary Regina Chwalek, the principal from 1969 to 1978.⁹⁶ Hers, in fact, was the longest tenure of any principal at the school. In addition to her administrative abilities, Sr. Regina was particularly skillful in dealing with parents and teachers.

It is with some irony that, in March of 1984, shortly after St. Adalbert's became free of debt, the organ "died". The Model A Hammond Electronic Organ, which had served the parish since 1936, refused to sound another note. It had been repaired many times before, but the cost of making the old instrument operable once again would have been more than its net worth. In May, the Parish Council voted that a committee would be formed to look into the matter of obtaining a new organ, and to make a recommendation. The Organ Selection Committee consisted of Father Adolphe, Michael Alexopolous, John Korona, Elizabeth Maguire, Victor Mosca, Diane Pace, Susan Peterson, and Walter Szczuka.

Mention of the old organ's demise and the search for a new one provides an opportunity to recall briefly some of the organists who have served at St. Adalbert's. Referred to earlier were Mr. Blum, the parish's first organist, and Miss Mary Javorski. Remembered also were the booming voice and powerful playing of Frank Gwozdz. Familiar to many parishioners was the softer style of Walter Golba, who had been a fixture in the choir loft from the 1930's until his death in 1982. He was succeeded at the keyboard by John Korona, in high school at the time, who introduced cantors to lead the congregation in singing. Sr. Evelyn, a Felician Sister, also offered her talents, and she was of great help before John Anderson, the current organist was hired in April, 1990.

As they searched for a suitable instrument, the Organ Selection Committee members visited many area churches and spoke with many organists and organ craftsmen. They also considered the musical needs of the parish and its financial capacity. The Committee finally recommended that a new pipe organ be constructed by J. W. Walker & Sons of Suffolk, England. A contract with the company was signed on December 28, 1984, and preparations were begun for an instrument appropriate to the church building.

The organ was constructed at the Walker factory in England, dismantled, shipped overseas, and carefully reassembled in St. Adalbert's choir loft. Three of the organ's builders came directly from England to help with the installation. The St. Adalbert's project, incidentally, was one of the first commissions the Walker company received in America.

The new instrument cost \$100,000. St. Adalbert's benefited from the favorable exchange rate that then existed between the English Pound and the American Dollar. The organ was completely paid for by donations from parishioners. The largest single contribution was \$15,000, given anonymously. It was a tribute to the generosity of all parishioners that such an enormous expense was settled quickly.

On Sunday, June 1, 1986, parishioners gathered for the dedication of the new organ and its inaugural recital. Barclay Wood played a musical program that demonstrated the organ's great versatility. A year-long series of recitals followed the dedication and featured a number of accomplished musicians from the area.

The instrument is technically called a "two manual and pedal mechanical action organ" with twenty-four ranks. Its 1,328 pipes are housed in a large oak case that towers approximately fifty feet above the congregation.

The past few years have been quiet ones for St. Adalbert's. The years of organizing and building have long passed. The concerns of the parish have shifted towards maintaining and benefiting from its accomplishments.

St. Adalbert's continues to minister to the needs of those in Enfield's Polish community, now mostly made up of the children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren of its immigrant founders.



The new organ. (Photographed by Frank Rostkowski)

Gradually, generation by generation, what has remained of that community has been assimilated into American culture. Thompsonville was never a New Britain. The identity of its Polish community has not been nourished by a regular supply of new immigrants. Despite this, a few families from Poland continue to settle in Enfield, and in St. Adalbert's they have found a spiritual home.

The parish also continues to serve non-Polish Catholics. Some have come in through inter-marriage; many are the descendants of families welcomed by Father Paul; others have children in the school; and still others are simply attracted to the parish's worship and hospitality.

If St. Adalbert's first members could be called "ambitious," the parishioners of today can be characterized by their loyalty. In these fast-moving times, the population of the parish has remained constant. Perhaps, in a different way, for many parishioners, young and old, St. Adalbert's continues to be what its founders had always hoped it would be: a place of their own, a place to speak with God.

WHO WAS SAINT ADALBERT?

Adalbert, a saint from Poland's earliest history, was born to a noble Bohemian family in 956. At baptism he was given the name Voytiekh (or Wojciech in Polish). While studying at Magdeburg, he took the name Adalbert at confirmation, the name of his instructor.

The bishop of Prague ordained Adalbert a sub-deacon and, suprisingly, when the bishop died in 982, young Adalbert was elected to take his place. He entered Prague barefoot and received a warm welcome from the people and Bohemia's ruler Boleslaus II. Despite his efforts, Adalbert was not able to make much of an impression as a bishop, and he left Prague for Rome in 990.

While in Italy, Adalbert the bishop also became a monk. Boleslaus II, meanwhile, pressed for his return. At the request of Pope John XV, Adalbert agreed to return to his diocese on the condition that he receive support from the civil authorities. This support withered when Adalbert tried to save the life of a woman who was convicted of adultery. He provided her sanctuary in a church, but the woman was dragged away and put to death. Adalbert excommunicated those responsible for the deed, and the unpopularity of this action caused him to flee to Rome once more.

Adalbert agreed to return to Prague only if he was free to do missionary work should he not be well received in his diocese. The massacre of his family and threats against his life convinced Adalbert to stay away from Prague, so he proceeded to introduce Christianity to the Prussians of Pomerania. In this effort he was supported by Boleslaw the Great of Poland and Otto III, the Holy Roman Emperor. Both men took an interest in Adalbert's missionary work. If Christianized, the Prussians would come under the jurisdiction of Boleslaw. The Prussians would also fall under the control of Otto III if he was successful in his



Saint Adalbert of Prague

scheme to acquire Poland for his empire.

Adalbert and his companions, regarded as Polish spies by the Prussians, were told to leave the area. When they refused to do so, on April 23, 997, they were beaten to death with oars. Adalbert's body was thrown into a river and later was washed up on Poland's shore. Devotion to Adalbert was promoted by both Boleslaw and Otto III to further their particular interests. His body was enshrined at Gniezno.

Though Adalbert found himself entangled in the political intrigues of newly Christianized Poland and its dealings with the Holy Roman Empire, he is remembered for his personal holiness, his particular care for the poor and the imprisoned, and his missionary zeal which eventually cost him his life. St. Adalbert's feast day is April 23.

PRIESTS AND SISTERS OF SAINT ADALBERT CHURCH

The following is a list of priests who have served as assistants at St. Adalbert's and their time of service:

Rev. Stanislaus Nalewajk	1930
Rev. Julius Pac	1930-1932
Rev. Peter Sroka	1932
Rev. John J. Sobolewski	1932-1933
Rev. Francis Duch	1933
Rev. Joseph Dawid	1933-1938
Rev. Hyacinth Lepak	1938-1939
Rev. Joseph F. Kasperkiewicz	1939-1941
Msgr. Louis B. Bleharczyk	1941-1942
Rev. Henry P. Fiedorczyk	1945-1955
Rev. Edward S. Jaksina	1955-1958
Rev. Francis V. Krukowski	1958-1960
Rev. Raymond J. Rubinowski	1960-1962
Rev. Paul P. Wysocki	1962-1967
Rev. Henry F. Smolinski	1967-1974
Rev. Daniel J. Plocharczyk	1975-1978

The following is a list of Felician Sisters who have served at St. Adalbert's and their time of service:

- + SM Berarda Szetela, 1935-1937
 - SM Josephine Mastalerz, 1935-1936; 1958-1977
- + SM Dosithea Piotrowska, 1936-1937
- + SM Sulpicia Sidor, 1937-1938
- + SM Norberta Rozmus, 1937-1938
- + SM Isabelle Dudolewicz, 1937-1938
- + SM Dominic Chomik, 1938-1942
- + SM Procopia Wisniewska, 1938-1940
 - SM Philomena Gawel, 1938-1939
 - SM Lucilda Nowakowski, 1939-1940
- + SM Acquina Baran, 1939-1942
- + SM Scholastica Stefanska, 1940-1954
- + SM Placentia Topor, 1940-1941; 1958-1960
 - SM Evelyn Rybicki, 1940-1943; 1945-1947
 - SM Heladia Frydrych, 1941-1944; 1950-1952; 1973-1974
- + SM Mansuetta Gadomska, 1942-1949
- + SM Jerome Gendaszek, 1943-1944
 - SM Chrysostom Lada, 1943-1944
 - SM Loretta Wiernasz, 1944-1945
 - S Agnes M. (Stanislaus) Zuber, 1944-1945
- + SM Romana Cichon, 1945-1947
- + SM Consolata Napierala, 1945-1950
- + SM Agnes Gazda 1946-1947
 - SM Apollinaris Biadasz, 1947-1953
- + SM Clementissima Danilowicz, 1947-1948
- + SM Aline Manski, 1948-1949
 - SM Floritta Biedron, 1948-1949; 1956-1957
- + SM Cesaria Ciepiela, 1949-1950
 - SM Mildred (Fidelis) Sklennik, 1949-1951
- + SM Anania Piekarz, 1950-1951
- + SM Dolores Nevinski, 1951-1953
 - SM Angelica Mycek, 1951-1954
- + SM Paulette Fidrych, 1952-1953
- + SM Infanta Czarnecka, 1953-1954
 - SM Amadeus Ruda, 1953-1954
 - SM Benedict Ornowski, 1953-1954

Sisters who resided at St. Adalbert's Convent following its completion:

- S Mary (Humilianna) Klaus, 1954-1957
- + SM Eudoxia Surowiec, 1954-1957
- SM Mechtilde Zalewski, 1954-1955; 1962-1963
- SM Florence Pelczynski, 1954-1957
- SM Marcilia Grabowski, 1955-1956
- SM Imelda Snopkowski, 1955-1956
- SM Eymard Motyl, 1956-1957
- + SM Bonaventure Moskwa, 1957-1960
- + SM Dorothea Rozmus, 1957-1958
- + SM Arcoline Jablonski, 1957-1960
- SM Miriam Kubicza, 1957-1959; 1962-1963
- S Eleanor Marie (Amanda) Statkiewicz, 1957-1958; 1985-1987
- SM Veronica Zacharczyk, 1958-1959; 1960-1963
- SM Andrea Szczechowicz, 1958-1960
- SM Emerentia Stachurski, 1959-1963
- SM Charles Sajek, 1959-1961
- SM Clarita Przbycien, 1959-1961
- + SM Jacobine Sudol, 1960-1961
- SM Leonard Golas, 1960-1961
- S Carol Marie (Dulciana) Zygo, 1960-1966
- + SM Gentylla Tracz, 1961-1965
- SM Vincent Rutkowski, 1961-1963
- SM Ruth Szczepkowski, 1961-1963
- SM Leonia Medulan, 1961-1962
- SM Alfreda Charzewski, 1963-1964; 1979-1980
- + SM Presentatia Budzynkiewicz, 1963-1965
- + SM Malvina Gondek, 1963-1964
- SM DeLourdes Andronik, 1963-1965
- S Mary (Eulalia) Rajner, 1963-1966
- SM Bonagrace Pawlicki, 1964-1965
- SM Theresa Pitrus, 1964-1966
- SM Gloriana Klambarowski, 1964-1967; 1968-1969
- + SM Rajneria Orłowska, 1965-1972
- SM Edna Korona, 1966-1968; 1979-1980
- + SM Carmeline Figura, 1966-1969
- SM Rosalie Nowak, 1966-1969
- SM Carmelita Jarocki, 1966-1968
- SM Vera (Elma) Zygmuntowicz, 1966-1968
- S Theresa Marie (Hermine) Grochowski, 1966-1968
- + SM Adalbert Chojnowski, 1967-1977
- SM Ursula Hodyl, 1968-1969

SM Regina Chwalek, 1969-1978
 SM Cantalicia Filip, 1969-1970
 + SM Vitalia Serafin, 1969-1970
 + S Catherine Mary Bigert, 1969-1974
 SM Demitria Rokita, 1969-1970; 1971-1973
 + SM Febronia Kata, 1970-1971
 + S Carolyn Marie Rutkowski, 1970-1971
 S Rose Julie Niemcewicz, 1971-1978
 + SM Josita Strycharz, 1972-1978
 + SM Janine Musnicki, 1973-1978
 S Francine Mary Sousa, 1973-1974
 SM Flora Szymczak, 1974-1979
 SM Vivian Kuszewska, 1974-1975
 SM Bertha Bieda, 1975-1985
 + SM Thereselle Lewandowski, 1975-1977
 SM Celestia Zawisza, 1977-1980
 SM Presentia Kaznocha, 1978-1980
 SM Phyllis Nowak, 1978-1979
 S. Joan Mary Korzeniewski, 1978-1979
 SM Joanille Wikar, 1979-1980
 SM Monica Domurat, 1979-1980
 S Theresa Mary Gondek, 1980-1986
 SM Elizabeth Wanczyk, 1980-1982
 SM Martha Zwolski, 1980-1985
 SM Francis deSales Markowski, 1982-1983
 SM Magdalen Pytelewski, 1983-1984
 SM Joan Pitrus, 1984-1987
 SM Dolorita Pitrus, 1984-1988
 S Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski, 1986-
 SM Anselma Smolenski, 1987-1988
 SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, 1987-1988
 SM Aniel Urbanek, 1988-1990
 SM Angelora Floryan, 1988-1989
 SM Esther Sibiga, 1988-1989
 SM Raymond Rutkowski, 1989-1990
 SM Amandine Zdrok, 1989-
 SM Rosalette Janeczek, 1990-
 SM Joseph Byczek, 1990-

(+ Deceased)

This list was compiled by Sister Rosemary Zawada, C.S.S.F. of the Felician
 Sisters, Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House, Enfield, Connecticut.

The following parishioners were ordained to the priesthood:

The REVEREND BOLESLAUS RARUS was born in Thompsonville to Joseph and Victoria (Kapinos) Rarus on May 1, 1914. He attended A. D. Higgins School in Enfield, and Enfield High School before entering St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield in 1932. Rarus completed his studies at St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester, New York and was ordained on May 18, 1940. Fr. Rarus served briefly that summer at St. Bernard's Church in Sharon and St. Patrick's in Waterbury. He then was assigned as an assistant pastor to Sacred Heart Church in New Britain. Fr. Rarus also served as an assistant at Holy Name Church in Stamford and St. Mary's in Jewett City. In 1961 he was named pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Brookfield. There he had the parish school, the church and the auditorium constructed, and the convent and rectory enlarged. Fr. Rarus was named pastor of St. Paul's Church in Greenwich in 1967 where he had a church and rectory constructed, and purchased a convent. He was also active in the Association of Polish Priests in Connecticut, serving for a time as its president. Fr. Rarus retired in 1987 and celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination on May 20, 1990.

The REVEREND JOSEPH KAMINSKY was born on August 15, 1935 to Joseph and Bertha (Gniady) Kaminsky in Thompsonville. He attended A. D. Higgins School in Enfield and Cathedral High School in Springfield. In 1952 Kaminski was enrolled at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, and two years later he entered St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester, New York. Following his ordination on May 20, 1961, Fr. Kaminsky served as an assistant pastor at St. John the Evangelist Church in West Hartford for seven years. In 1968 he moved to St. Timothy's in West Hartford, and two years later to St. Maurice Church in New Britain. After a brief return to St. John the Evangelist's in 1972, Fr. Kaminsky began seven years of service at East Haven's Our Lady of Pompeii Church in 1973. He moved to Christ the King Church in Bloomfield in 1980, and four years later, Fr. Kaminsky became the pastor of St. Monica's in Northford where he remains today.

The REVEREND PHILIP J. CASCIA was born to Charles and Rose (Montagna) Cascia on December 27, 1951 in Springfield, Massachusetts. Cascia attended St. Adalbert's School and, following graduation in 1965, he was enrolled at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield. He completed his studies at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and was ordained on May 28, 1977. Fr. Cascia was first assigned as an assistant pastor to St. Francis Xavier Church in Waterbury. In 1978 he began seven years of service at St. Anthony Church in Prospect. While in the Waterbury area, Fr. Cascia founded the St. Vincent dePaul Society of Waterbury, Inc., an organization that now runs a shelter and soup kitchen in Waterbury, and a shelter in Meriden. He has also been involved in promoting the construction of affordable housing. In 1985 Fr. Cascia was assigned to Sacred Heart High School in Waterbury, and helped to organize the Joint Venture Sports Exchange Program between students in Waterbury and the Soviet Union. Similar exchange programs have been arranged with China, Vietnam, Finland, and Thailand. Fr. Cascia has received numerous awards for his humanitarian efforts, including the National Jefferson Award which he was given in 1989. That same year Fr. Cascia returned to St. Anthony's as pastor and he serves in that capacity today.

The REVEREND JOHN P. GWOZDZ was born on June 26, 1953 in Springfield, Massachusetts to John J. and Jane (Trela) Gwozdz. He attended St. Adalbert's School and Enfield High School. In 1975, Gwozdz was graduated from Central Connecticut State College in New Britain. He was active in the Enfield Historical Society and became its president in 1980. The following year, Gwozdz began studying for the priesthood at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore, Maryland. He served his diaconate internship at St. Joseph's in New Haven. Ordained on December 20, 1986, Fr. Gwozdz remained at St. Joseph's until he received his current assignment to St. James Church in Manchester in 1987.

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2. Interview with Josephine Kiszka, 83 Park Avenue, Enfield, Connecticut, March 23, 1990.
3. Ewing and Norton, *Broadlooms and Businessmen*, p. 178.
4. Ibid.
5. "Golden Anniversary Of Polish People Who Settled In This Town," *Thompsonville Press*, July 17, 1952, p. 1.
6. Prof. St. Estreicher, "Galicia in the Period of Autonomy and Self-Government, 1849-1914," *The Cambridge History of Poland*, vol 2, W. F. Reddaway, et al, eds., New York: Octagon Books, 1971, p. 432.
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8. Kiszka, interview.
9. "Souvenir of the Dedication of St. Patrick's Church, 1889-1904, Thompsonville, Conn.," November 20, 1904, commemorative program.
10. "Srebrny Jubileusz Zalozenia Par. Sw. Wojciecha W Thompsonville, Conn." (Silver Jubilee Of St. Adalbert's Parish In Thompsonville, Conn. Is Celebrated), *Dziennik Dla Wszystkich* (Everybody's Daily), November 1, 1940, pp. 8-9.
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12. Ibid.
13. Dolores A. Liptak, *European Immigrants and the Catholic Church in Connecticut, 1870-1920*, New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1987, p. 155.
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16. Ibid.

17. Archbishop John Bonzano to Bishop John J. Nilan, September 29, 1913, Archdiocese of Hartford Archives, The Chancery, Hartford, Connecticut.
18. Bishop John J. Nilan to Archbishop John Bonzano, October 1, 1913, Archdiocese of Hartford Archives, The Chancery, Hartford, Connecticut.
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Chapter Two: The Federkiewicz Years 1915-1938

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23. Interview with Msgr. George G. Bartlewski, St. Stanislaus' Rectory, 510 West Street, Bristol, Connecticut, August 30, 1984.
24. *The Catholic Transcript*, February 25, 1915, p. 2.
25. *The Catholic Transcript*, June 10, 1915, p. 2.
26. Interview with Stella Bajek and Annette Lugan, St. Adalbert's Rectory, 90 Alden Avenue, Enfield, Connecticut, January 10, 1984.
27. *The Catholic Transcript*, October 14, 1915, p. 2.
28. Kiska, interview.
29. *The Catholic Transcript*, May 11, 1916, p. 3.
30. Interview with Dr. Joseph Javorski, 182 Elm Street, Windsor Locks, Connecticut, September 22, 1988.
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32. *Dziennik Dla Wszystkich* (Everybody's Daily), November 1, 1940, p. 9.
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34. "St. Adalbert's Church Unfurls Service Flag," *Thompsonville Press*, August 3, 1918, clipping.
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42. Javorski, interview.
43. Ibid.
44. *The Catholic Transcript*, July 19, 1928, p. 2.
45. Ruth Bridge, "Current History of the Town of Enfield, April 1928 to April 1929," *Daughters of the American Revolution. Conn. Penelope Terry Abbey Chapter, Enfield*, vol. 2, no. 27, p. 116.

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49. "1915-1945, Pamietnik."

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51. Ibid.

52. "Priest Killed In Suffield Auto Mishap," *Hartford Courant*, December 28, 1938, p. 1.

53. "Founder of St. Adalbert's Is Mourned," dateline: December 28, (1938), clipping.

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56. Ibid.

57. Ewing and Norton, *Broadlooms and Businessmen*, p. 291.

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60. "St. Adalbert's In Thompsonville Marks Jubilee," *The Catholic Transcript*, October 24, 1940, p. 1.

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62. (No headline) Clipping reporting Rev. Paul J. Bartlewski's appointment to the Reemployment Committee of Draft Board 7-A, August 12, 1943.

63. "Fr. Bartlewski Elected Legion State Chaplain," September 17, 1945, clipping.

64. "Fr. Bartlewski Gets Selective Service Medal," July 23, 1946, clipping.

65. Ewing and Norton, *Broadlooms and Businessmen*, p. 303.

66. "St. Adalbert's In Thompsonville Has Mortgage Burning," *The Catholic Transcript*, November 22, 1945, p. 2.

67. Rev. Paul J. Bartlewski, Appeal Letter to Parishioners, regarding the erection of a Memorial Crucifixion Group at St. Adalbert's Cemetery, 1951.

68. Minutes of the Parent-Educator Group. Saint Adalbert's School, Enfield, Connecticut, 1950-1951.

69. Annual Report. Saint Adalbert Church, Enfield, Connecticut, 1950.

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75. "Ground Breaking Sunday To Launch St. Adalbert's School," *Thompsonville Press*, May 8, 1958, clipping.
76. "Father Paul Starts St. Adalbert's School," *Thompsonville Press*, clipping.
77. Rev. Paul J. Bartlewski, Appeal Letter to Parishioners, regarding School Building Fund Campaign, 1958.
78. Donors to St. Adalbert's School Building Fund, list, 1958.
79. Annual Report. St. Adalbert Church, Enfield, Connecticut, 1959.
80. Annual Report. St. Adalbert Church, Enfield, Connecticut, 1968.
81. Annual Report. St. Adalbert Church, Enfield, Connecticut, 1965.
82. "Highlights Of Testimonial To Fr. Paul On 25 Years At St. Adalbert's," *Springfield Daily News*, April 29, 1963, clipping.
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86. "Bigelow Co. To Decide On Future," *Springfield Daily News*, February 9, 1971, p. 1.
87. Bartlewski, interview.
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93. Minutes of the Parish Council. Saint Adalbert Church, Enfield, Connecticut, November 12, 1972.
94. Annual Report. St. Adalbert Church, Enfield, Connecticut, 1972.
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List:

Donors to St. Adalbert's School Building Fund, 1958.

Written information was received from:

Msgr. Louis B. Blecharczyk
Rev. Philip J. Cascia
Rev. Edward S. Jaksina
Rev. Joseph T. Kaminsky
Rev. Francis V. Krukowski
Rev. Daniel J. Plocharczyk
Rev. Boleslaus J. Rarus

Interviews:

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